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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

Tässä tutkielmassa käsitellään pahuuden, julmuuden ja hirviömäisyyden ilmenemistä Mary Shelleyn kirjoittaman romaanin *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818) päähenkilön, Victor Frankensteinin, toiminnassa. Tutkielman tarkoitus on osoittaa, että Frankenstein ei ole kirjan narratiivissa ainoastaan traagisten tapahtumien kohde, kokija ja uhri, vaan pahoiksi, julmiksi ja hirviömäisiksi luokiteltavien tekojen aktiivinen tekijä. Lisäksi hän toimii romaanissa esiintyvän väkivallan mahdollistajana ja ylläpitäjänä.

Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus:*in* tapahtumia ja Victor Frankensteinin minä-muotoista kerrontaa tarkastellaan pääasiassa teologis-filosofisen ja neuropsykologisen pahuuden tutkimuksen kautta. Analyysissä sovelletaan myös hirviötutkimuksen (monster studies), sosiaalipsykologisen pahuuden tutkimuksen ja kriittisen posthumanismin käsitteitä ja ilmiöitä. Tutkielmassa hyödynnetään dekonstruktiivista lukutapaa.

Tutkielmassa osoitetaan, että Victor Frankensteinin toiminnassa ilmenee runsaasti pahuuden, julmuuden ja hirviömäisyyden tunnusmerkkejä. Hänen toiminnassaan toistuvat muun muassa lakien ja arvostettujen normien haastaminen, epäoikeutetut ylilyönnit käytöksessä ja ajattelumalleissa, voimakkaan solipsistinen ajattelutapa, julmia tekoja mahdollistava toiseuttaminen, tietoinen empatian tuntemisen torjuminen sekä voimakas determinismi. Tutkielmasta ilmenee myös, että Frankensteinin toiminta mahdollistaa ja pitää yllä henkistä ja fyysistä kärsimystä, joka kohdistuu hänen ja hänen vastustajansa lisäksi syyttömiin sivullisiin.

Tutkielmassa pohditaan lisäksi lyhyesti, miten dekonstruktiivisen lukutavan hyödyntäminen *Frankensteinin* kaltaisissa klassikkoteoksissa saattaa edesauttaa ymmärrystä toiseuttamista ja siitä seuraavia julmia tekoja kohtaan.

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Victor Frankenstein as Monster

Evil, Cruelty and Monstrosity in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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1. Introduction: Monsters, Evil and *Frankenstein* in Popular Culture

Throughout the history of mankind, malevolent monsters and evil beings have fascinated and disturbed us. Folklore, literature and cinema offer us a wide variety of villains, both intriguing and appalling. Sometimes evil is presented in the form of a beast, a big bad wolf or a terrifying troll (such as in the classic stories The Three Little Pigs & The Big Bad Wolf or Three Billy Goats Gruff), sometimes as a human being who disregards the moral codes of gods and men (such as Patrick Bateman in Bret Easton Ellis' novel *American Psycho* {1991}). As our understanding of the world and its creatures expands, so does our perception of evil, monstrosity and cruelty – both in the real world and in the world of arts. It is becoming more and more clear that although human beings are drawn to straightforward categorizations, the distinction between good and evil is rarely straightforward. Strict categorizations might lead to cruelty against a presumed evildoer (Taylor 12–13) which is one reason why it is necessary for human beings to be able to adjust their belief systems. Cinema and literature might help in practicing this adjustment with help from modern heroes and villains such as Shrek from the movie franchise of the same name (2001) or Dexter Morgan from Jeff Lindsay's book series (2004–2015) turned into a TV-series. Such characters challenge our traditional views on monstrosity and evil.

Although there currently exists a wide spectrum of heroes and villains in literature and cinema, the most classic monsters are those who are wholly evil both inside and out. Examples of these include supernatural villains such as Grendel from *Beowulf*, Sauron from *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), Freddy Krueger from the horror franchise *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) and the Devil from various works of literature and cinema. Their urge towards destruction cannot be explained or justified. They cannot be influenced or persuaded to be anything else but monsters. Such evil is terrifying and even entertaining but does not offer

much intellectual challenge. The minds of the reader or the moviegoer are more affected and their views challenged when the dichotomy between good and evil, monsters and humans, is less obvious (see Hills 2005; Taylor 2009).

Characters who are intimidating or seemingly horrendous because of appearance or other traits are sometimes given the surprising status of a hero. The ugly green ogre from the movie franchise *Shrek* might be hunted with torches and pitchforks but nevertheless acts as a hero. Quasimodo from Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831) or even Marvel characters such as The Thing and The Incredible Hulk appear monstrous and terrifying but challenge our traditional tendency towards the fear of the different and unattractive: a monstrous looking being can also be the protagonist through persona and actions.

In many narratives a hitherto evil villain is either revealed to be a misunderstood hero or turns into a hero figure. Perhaps the best-known example of a villain turning good is the terrifying Darth Vader who, to save his son from a horrible death, turns against the evil Emperor in *Star Wars: Episode VI – The Return of the Jedi* (1983). Characters who are revealed to be good despite their intimidating appearance or actions include Sirius Black and Severus Snape from the *Harry Potter* series (1997–2007), Te Ka from the Disney picture *Vaiana* (2016) and several characters in movies by Hayao Miyazaki. Spin-off movies and novels justifying the actions of famous villains have also become increasingly popular. Examples of this include Gregory Maguire's novel (1995) turned Broadway musical *Wicked* (2003) which gives the antagonist originally known from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) a voice of her own. A similar example is found in the movie *Maleficent* (2015) in which the antagonist originally known from *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) is revealed to be a secret hero. The shift from monstrous to good might adjust our views on good and evil, monsters and humans, in an entertaining and uplifting way.

As the concepts of monstrosity and evil have shifted from vampires, werewolves and the like towards psychological abnormalities, human villains are becoming increasingly recurring characters in fiction (see Hills 2005). Social psychologist Roy F. Baumeister claims that the shift from supernatural monsters to human villains (who might initially appear charismatic and amiable but nevertheless commit horrendous acts of evil) began with Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* in 1960 (64). In the fantasy genre, the best-known example of a seemingly harmless but supremely evil human villain might be Tom Riddle from the *Harry Potter* saga who is at first described as a handsome and charismatic young man but whose later appearance as the red-eyed and noseless Lord Voldemort is the ultimate result of his sins. Oscar Wilde's famous novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) includes a similar example although it is Dorian's portrait which displays the corruptive effects of his crimes while Dorian himself remains beautiful. At times evil does not corrupt one's appearance but is evoked by disability. A wide variety of movies depict villains who suffer from a disability somehow connected to their predilection for evil acts (Nayar 142). Examples of this include the movies *Speed* (1994), *Enter the Dragon* (1973), *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (1997), *Goldfinger* (1964) (Nayar 142) and *Skyfall* (2012).

However, evil is not necessarily visible in one's appearance although it is traditionally associated with the witch's nose, red eyes, horns, fangs, etc. Examples of hidden monstrosity include the Manhattan-based investment banker and serial killer Patrick Bateman from Bret Easton Ellis' novel *American Psycho* (1991) and the intelligent and charismatic psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter featured in four different novels by Thomas Harris. An evil supervillain such as Sauron from *The Lord of the Rings* is easy to recognize as a monster (Taylor 215) but Bateman, Lecter and the like pose an undetected threat. It is also a common plot twist to have a sidekick or a friend revealed to be either the antagonist or their assistant. The betrayal makes the friend's monstrousness even more terrifying as the corruptive effect of evil exists right

beside the protagonist – held close and trusted. Examples of this include Professor Quirrell and the pet rat Scabbers from the *Harry Potter* series, Prince Hans from Disney's *Frozen* (2013) and Saruman the White from *Lord of the Rings.*

Cinema and literature have also depicted famous antagonists from historical events placing Adolf Hitler, Amon Goeth and Idi Amin as semi-fictional characters (in the movies *The Downfall* {2004}, *Schindler's List* {1993} and *The Last King of Scotland* {2006}, respectively). Such men have the appearance of an average human being but also the capacity to commit horrific crimes. This duality reminds the reader or the moviegoer of the disturbing fact that evil is not exclusive to fiction. Herein lies the true horror of contemporary monstrosity: it is more difficult to defend oneself against undetected evil. The shift from presumably good to deceitful monstrousness might adjust our views while evoking fear and upset.

Traditional themes, such as monstrosity and evil, can be questioned within a work itself or by means of a critical reading of a text, for example via a feminist (see Gilbert 2006) or a postcolonial perspective. Sometimes the audiences can disagree with an author or a filmmaker about the content of their work. Many feminist readings have criticized the romantic advances of, for example, Han Solo and Edward Cullen in the *Star Wars* and *Twilight* (2005–2008) franchises (Cocca 2016; Larsson 2011). While the determined advances of these characters towards the reluctant or helpless females have been considered romantic by many viewers, some might argue that Solo forcing a kiss on Leia (Cocca 103) or Cullen breaking into Bella's bedroom to watch her sleep (Larsson 151) is harassment rather than romantic gestures. It could be argued that the famous stairwell scene in the film *Gone with the Wind* (1939) represents a type of domestic abuse rather than a manifestation of epic love.

Nonetheless, a critical reading does not always contradict the work. Sometimes the author or filmmaker leaves room for multiple interpretations. Tove Jansson, for example, depicts the character Groke (Mörkö/Mårran) as a terrifying ice monster avoided by the warm

and fun loving Moomin family. The character evokes fear or pity depending on the reader. She is either a malevolent force harassing the family or a lonely creature longing for companionship. A presumed villain, such as Groke, might receive absolution only several years after the work has been published. Furthermore, the actions of a hero (such as Han Solo, Edward Cullen or Rhett Butler from *Gone with the Wind*) might be questioned by critical reassessment after years of appreciation. The reassessment of values is a continuous process that relates both to critical and aesthetic judgments but also to values in society at large.

In Mary Shelley's groundbreaking novel *Frankenstein,* published in 1818, it is the character of "the monster" who has gained understanding, if not absolution, by means of a close reading after decades of evoking fear and disgust among critics. Similar to Tove Jansson's Groke, Mary Shelley's nameless creature can be interpreted simply as a monster haunting and tormenting the protagonist or as a sympathetic creature with his own motives, needs and emotions. Although the critical community is beginning to see the creature as a victim,[1] consumers of popular culture might still perceive him as a terrifying and ugly monster – despite the fact that he belongs more accurately to the same category of heroes and villains as Severus Snape, the misunderstood Miyazaki characters or Darth Vader do. The secondary aim of this thesis is to deepen this absolution the creature has gained over the past decades through a close reading of *Frankenstein.*

However, the secondary aim cannot be reached by concentrating on the creature. It is necessary to focus on the agency and motives of the creator, Victor Frankenstein: the secret monster who resembles Hannibal Lecter, Tom Riddle and Edward Cullen through his undetected crimes. The character of Victor Frankenstein is usually analysed only in relation to his creature either as the oppressed or the oppressor (e.g. Botting, Brooks, Clark, Feder, Ryan).

[1] For example, Melanie Friese and Anna E. Clark's interpretations, as opposed to those of Fred Botting and Helena Feder.

However, Victor Frankenstein is a strong individual character before and after the creation of his "monster" and should be examined carefully as such: an individual character. The primary aim of this study is to emphasize the monstrosity and evil within the creator not merely as a response to his creature's crimes but as an autonomous factor. As many critics, such as Melanie Friese and Anna E. Clark, have argued that the creature might not be the true villain in Shelley's novel, the goal of this thesis is to emphasize why Victor Frankenstein is – although he is not directly revealed to be a secret monster within a text as Lecter and Riddle are but by means of a critical reading.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Earlier Studies on *Frankenstein*

After two hundred years since Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* was originally published, discourse on the novel "continues to reach staggering proportions" (Feder 56). The website of the Department of English in University of Pennsylvania alone offers more than two hundred academic articles on *Frankenstein* ranging from the monster's vegetarian diet to presentations of feminism in the novel's subplots. Recurring study questions and declarations revolving around Shelley's novel concern monstrosity, monstrousness and evil. What qualities make a monster, what defines evil? Is Frankenstein's creature a demon or a doppelgänger of his creator or perhaps an innocent soul who has inevitably turned to evil? How does Shelley present monstrosity and evil in her novel and what does this presentation suggest about our culture and society, even about human beings in general?

Many critical readings of *Frankenstein* study the character of Victor Frankenstein's creation, "the monster", as a terrifying antagonist and nonhuman agent. Victor Frankenstein has been traditionally perceived as the victim (see for example, Foust 1980). These readings consider the creature's monstrosity as a fact; an allegory supporting their thesis. Helena Feder, for example, calls the character a "moral stain" who "embodies death and destruction both as an example of and corrective to the arrogance of Western culture" (64). R. E. Foust describes the character as a malevolent creature and thus a textbook example of a fantasy antagonist who, as a "repressed chthonic doppelgänger", haunts and masters his creator, the innocent young Frankenstein (para. 14). A monster sometimes serves as a "screen onto which all anxieties and fears of the community are projected" (Nayar 142). Many researchers, such as Fred Botting (who has written that the monster deliberately challenges the laws of humanity and nature), Paul Cantor, Nancy Yousef and John Clubbe tend to interpret the creature as a

metaphor for something disturbing or fundamentally unacceptable – and Victor Frankenstein as the human counterpart and reactor. Feder, for example, states in her essay (2010) that there are plenty of Marxist analyses of the novel on how the creature's monstrosity depicts the problems of the modern era and the fears humans have about society and even themselves. This might explain why the concept of "the monster's" unnatural birth has become a political metaphor: the terrorist group ISIS has been referred to as the Frankenstein's monster of the Middle East (Vallely 2014), and even president Donald Trump has been called the Frankenstein monster of American politics (Kludt 2016).

Although Frankenstein's creature has traditionally been perceived as a force challenging human laws, human agency and human uniqueness (Feder 2010), more modern views regard the monster as a victim, not the evil doppelgänger, of Victor Frankenstein. These interpretations suggest that the creature is both monstrous in his appearance and acts of crime and still a sympathetic character: an antagonist with comprehensible motives. In his study on *Frankenstein,* Botting has stated that it is radical and revolutionary to challenge conservative arguments and "reconstruct the monster-makers as monsters" (para. 8). However, opposite views do exist. Peter Brooks, for example, calls the creation of "the monster" the result of Frankenstein's "illicit curiosity" (para. 30). According to Canguilhem and his studies on monstrosity, monstrous deformity has been interpreted as a sign of conscious act of defiance, but the birth of a monster is not the crime of the monster but that of its creator (Wright 20). Robert M. Ryan states that in the 1970's "a general reassessment of the novel's meaning" began to surface, especially in the fields of feminism and psychoanalysis (para. 1). This new interpretation is more sympathetic to the creature. Many researchers, such as Leslie Tannenbaum in 1977 (Ryan 1988) have studied the concepts of production and human attempts to step into the Creator's shoes; instead of being an active force of destruction, the character of "the monster" stands here as a cautionary example of the excessive power of

science and unnatural production, making Victor Frankenstein the true culprit. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have stated that in the overlapping themes of *Frankenstein* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Victor Frankenstein represents the satanic vice and Eve-like fall of illicit curiosity (233). Besides in the fields of evil and monstrosity, the creature has received sympathetic remarks in other areas of study. Anna E. Clark, for example, has studied the narrative significance of the monster's monologues and the sympathetic reactions they provide (2014). Robert M. Ryan has studied the sincere religiousness of the monster compared to the spiritual indifference of Victor Frankenstein, making the monster more human than his creator (1988). It is evident that the traditional dichotomy between an evil monster and an innocent victim has been replaced by many new perspectives in critical readings of Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

2.2. A Very Brief Introduction to Monstrosity and Evil

2.2.1. Monstrosity

In order to understand the monstrosity and evil in Shelley's novel one needs to understand the concepts in general. Unlike the critical readings of *Frankenstein*, the fields studying monstrosity in philosophy, sociology and visual culture, for example, remain somewhat unanimous in their definitions. The word "monster" is derived from the verb *monere*, to warn, in several languages such as French, Anglo-Norman languages, classical Latin, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese and thus draws attention to the visible, dangerous overlapping of human and animal, human and non-human (Boon 33). In *Frankenstein*, this overlapping is visible in the creature's body representing the broken barrier between the living and the dead. Researchers studying the aspects of monstrosity agree that as early as in Aristotelian times monstrosity has been considered a visible crime against nature and its order – usually in the body of a living

creature (Wright 31). Traditional monsters have been depicted as hybrids of different species, creatures born with additional or lacking limbs or (as in the case of Frankenstein's creature) superhuman proportions (Wright 5). The most terrifying monstrous creatures were *human*-animal hybrids breaking the law of human uniqueness (Wright 20).

Naturally, the concept of monstrosity relies on the constructed norms of "us" and "Others", "our way" and the "abnormal", making the approach very ethnocentric (Wright 15). According to Wright, Western civilizations have traditionally considered wild men, people representing "abnormal" body types (48), women and different races (such as the Pygmies {15}, Mongolians or Ethiopians {33}) "sub-human", "quasi-human" or "not quite human", at least compared to the civilized white male. This is why the idea of monstrosity often collides with racism: monstrosity does not only challenge the image of the human body but also the values and lifestyles of different societies. Canguilhem has stated that "monstrosity is never an intrinsic quality – it is a narrative imposed on certain appearances or behaviors at particular times in a specific social context" (qtd. in Wright 3). Nayar claims in a posthumanist approach that monster studies examine structural exclusion which marginalizes and demonizes certain races as beastly (115). Disability studies also bear much similarity to monster studies: besides different races and cultures, different kinds of body types and mental disorders that do not fit the prevalent perception of normal have been considered monstrous and people affected by them have been categorized as "freaks", "non-humans" or "inhuman" (Nayar 111). A monster would thus mean "a fearsome, incomprehensible Other".

Primarily, the fear of monstrosity is that of the unknown and unintelligible. The truly monstrous remains a mystery and cannot be understood (Wright 18). Nayar states that monsters are "expressions of cultural anxieties about – and demonization of – forms of life" (114). The incomprehensible is found monstrous because it either does not fit into established categories (such as human, animal, male, female) or would fit into several and contradicting ones (Nayar

114). Hence, as mystery is replaced with knowledge and established categories are widened, the aspect of monstrousness disappears or, at least, diminishes. As science began to evolve rapidly in the late 19th century so did the understanding towards abnormal creatures and their origins as well as foreign cultures and customs (Wright 104). Monstrosity shifted, gradually and slowly, to be understood as a psychological quality: monsters are not necessarily creatures disturbing in appearance, like Frankenstein's creature is, but in behavior, such as Victor Frankenstein: the scientist who dissects and combines corpses into a massive frame, reanimates life to serve his own ambition and then repeatedly abandons his creation.

As the current definition of monstrosity is decreasingly associated as a physical attribute instead of a behavioral or psychological abnormality, it is the inability to recognize human monsters by their appearance or narration that now makes them fearsome (Wright 148). In her study, Wright lists Ted Bundy, the American serial killer, and Anders Breivik, the Norwegian far-right terrorist, as modern monsters whose motives and evolving into murderers are still difficult to comprehend. This is especially so in the case of Ted Bundy who appeared to be a very normal, handsome and successful middle-class American. Somewhat similar is the character of Victor Frankenstein: a young, upper-class European man who has an overwhelming desire for illicit actions along with a fearsomely disdainful attitude towards established norms. Because of the inability to understand such modern monsters, some scholars have questioned the limitations of psychiatric diagnoses currently available. Baron Cohen, for example, has criticized the limited amount of mental disorder descriptions which focus on lack of empathy because a violent person can in modern standards be classified as "psychologically normal" (158). Such is the case with, for example, Anders Breivik. Until such mental disorder descriptions are formed, if they ever will be, human monsters remain mysterious beasts.

2.2.2. Evil

Unlike monstrosity, which relies heavily on constructed norms, evil is not a concept that has been much affected by scientific revelations. Human response to evil remains somewhat unchanged despite new psychological discoveries. Evil and cruelty seem to be judged similarly in different cultures as there exists some anthropological evidence of a universal moral code (Taylor 5). Kathleen Taylor compares universal grammar, such as the existence of nouns and verbs, to universal moral code, such as the existence of ideas of impurity, blameworthy and responsibility (37).

However, compared to the concept of monstrosity, the concept of evil poses a far more complicated problem in, for example, theology, philosophy, psychology and criminology because of two reasons. First, unlike with monstrosity, the motivations behind evil deeds are not entirely beyond comprehension (Baumeister 8). This means that because evildoers are not part of a different monstrous race there lies a less distinct dichotomy between “the righteous” and “the evildoers” than between “normal” and “monstrous”. This makes evil an uncomfortably applicable attribute to every human being (even to a charming young genius such as Victor Frankenstein). Secondly, the most argued debate on evil must still be that of the broadness of the term: is evil categorized as an almost supernatural phenomenon that emerges only rarely (in events such as the genocides in Nazi Germany and Rwanda) or is a wider set of immoral acts from theft to domestic violence included in the definition (Baumeister 7). However, similarly to monstrosity and despite the broadness or narrowness of the term, evil is primarily seen by scholars of many different theoretical backgrounds as an imperative offence against the laws of God, nature and man (Eagleton 2000, 80; 81; 82). According to these theories, evil aims to destruct and make void concepts usually held valuable, such as the

sanctity of human life. As Baumeister has stated, evil offends people's most valued beliefs (12). This is what makes evil disturbing and fearsome.

Many researchers believe that the concept of evil can be a very misleading one. Eagleton, among others, has claimed that the usual perception of evil includes the idea that if cruel actions are explainable, they cannot be evil. If they are evil, there is nothing to add to the matter (Eagleton 8; see e.g. Soyka 1992). Eagleton himself does not agree with this contrast. On the contrary, he claims that even though evil "transcends everyday social conditioning" (16) it is not fundamentally mysterious. The concept of evil thus presents a less mysterious approach to heinous acts of crime than monstrosity does. Although evil acts cannot by definition be thoroughly justified, there can be attempts of explaining the destructive, "even atrocious" forces that work behind evil minds and deeds (Baumeister 8). Baumeister has presented an idea that there indeed exists some aspects to analysing evil motives – although one could not relate with or justify them because they do not represent rational efforts in problem solving or goal pursuing (40). According to Baumeister, evil actions are usually massive overreactions to a problem: for example, satisfying sexual desire with rape, domestic issues with murder or national conflicts with genocide – or quenching thirst for knowledge with dissecting and reanimating corpses, as in the case of Victor Frankenstein. In neuroscience this is known as a failure in matching a threat with a response (Taylor 86).

Many current scholars tend to avoid the term "evil" altogether because of its uncompromising connotations. According to Kathleen Taylor, considering someone as evil presents a risk of the essence trap: the belief that a being is controlled by a core essence that is difficult or even impossible to change (9). Describing actions as evil, "abominations perpetrated by madmen or monsters", pushes the phenomenon away from ourselves (Taylor 12). This is why she prefers the terms "cruel" and "cruelty" to "evil". Instead of seeing someone as "irredeemable and impenetrably sadistic" we should study cruel actions as failed threat

responses with recognizable motives (57). Perceiving someone as evil may lead to exaggerated cruelty towards the feared perpetrator because true evil is commonly regarded to be something which can righteously be avenged and annihilated without moral damage to the annihilator (Taylor 12–13). This is how Victor Frankenstein sees his creature: as a nonhuman, evil and malevolent force that must be either avoided or destroyed. The concept of evil leaves little room for debate whereas cruelty is something one can examine and even solve. Simon Baron Cohen, the author of *The Science of Evil: On Empathy and the Origins of Cruelty* prefers the term "empathy erosion" to "evil" (Baron Cohen 6). Disorders which can lead to "the empathy circuit" being down (Baron Cohen 23, 24, 27–40, 41, 45, 81, 83, 86, 122, 149–150, 153) can be examined and sometimes even treated. Trying to explain and understand evil, however, poses a moral dilemma. Claiming an offender to be purely evil is an easy explanation for a victim's suffering. Baron Cohen states that the concept of evil is a routine interpretation of awful behavior (5). A particular challenge is to explain what makes people capable of causing hurt to each other without resorting to a notion of excessive wickedness (Baron Cohen 5).

Trying to comprehend the perpetrators' point of view might be considered offensive to the victim (Baumeister 8). As Taylor has stated, a mystifying enemy risks no moral burden, but an explicable crime might offer the culprit some degree of sympathy (11). Understanding the motives for vicious crimes makes evil something it is usually not perceived to be: human. Evildoers, as monsters, are easily considered not quite human – free to loathe and excoriate. Taylor explains that it is natural to resent and resist attempts to understand evildoers, since empathizing with them has the risk of contamination; the listeners might find themselves sharing thoughts and feelings with the evildoers (12). Evil is nevertheless a trait one does not want to be connected with extrinsically or innately. The term used to disconnect and free ourselves from unconceivable crimes and those who commit them. Victor Frankenstein offers a fine example of this way of thinking by exclaiming to his creature: "'Begone! I will not hear

you. There can be no community between you and me; we are enemies.'" (*F* 124) Frankenstein thus purges himself of "the contagious evil" of his creature.

Understanding that human evil and cruelty are not incomprehensible aspects might feel alarming because it connects every human being to evil and makes everyone at least theoretically able to commit hideous cruelties (Taylor 232). This thought disturbs Victor Frankenstein's young bride, Elizabeth, as she contemplates: "Before, I looked upon the accounts of vice and injustice that I read in books or heard from others as tales of ancient days or imaginary evils; at least they were remote and more familiar to reason than to the imagination; but now misery has come home, and men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other's blood" (*F* 114). No matter how natural and sometimes psychologically necessary this dichotomy between "decent us" end "evil Others" seems, shifting from disconnection to communication might not lead to evil taking over but to less cruelty. The depiction of Victor Frankenstein and his creature examines this idea. *Frankenstein* is a fine example of a story in which the dichotomy between good and evil does not result into an honourable battle with the righteous hero left standing but to death and destruction amongst all.

2.3. The Contribution of This Study

A remarkable number of critical studies discussing evil and monstrosity in Shelley's *Frankenstein* focus on the creature, his vices and virtues, human language abilities and nonhuman appearance. However, as the focus from monstrous appearance has shifted to monstrous psychology, I believe that a closer reading of the creator, Victor Frankenstein, is needed; not as a parallel character but an individual one. The creature's monstrous appearance can be explained by the failure of the creator and the creature's crimes can be explained by the desperation he feels because of the complete isolation from the human race. Since Victor

Frankenstein is the agent of both – the creation and the initial abandonment – it is logical to observe this character more closely. I also believe that as the current theory of monstrosity relies heavily on the mysteriousness and incomprehensibility of the human mind, theories of evil must be utilized more in order to gain a sensible analysis of the character. It would not be productive or satisfactory to claim that the monstrous antagonist of Shelley's novel is Victor because one can explain why his creature is not. The aspect of evil provides more material to analyzing and understanding the crimes of Frankenstein. Although Victor is commonly regarded as a victim of his own actions or by those committed by his creature, Shelley depicts the character rather as a vain and arrogant man blind to his own deficiencies than an innocent sufferer. Frankenstein's arrogance makes Shelley's novel, published in 1818, a very contemporary piece of literature worth examining from less utilized perspectives.

In this analysis of monstrosity and evil in Mary Shelley's character Victor Frankenstein, I rely primarily on three sources: Alexa Wright's extensive analysis on monsters and monstrosity throughout the ages (2013), the theological and philosophical interpretation of evil by Terry Eagleton (2000) and the neurological and psychological approach to human evil and cruelty by Kathleen Taylor (2009). Two secondary sources are utilized as well: an empathy-based scientific exploration of evil by Simon Baron Cohen (2011) and a sociological and criminological theory by Roy F. Baumeister (1999). As Shelley's novel utilizes John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the concepts of creation, the fallen archangel and the creature as a demon, the theological approach is well-founded. A close reading of *Frankenstein* through the themes of *Paradise Lost* done by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar is utilized in this analysis as well.

Chapter 3.1. examines the philosophical concepts of monstrosity and theological evil in Shelley's novel. Chapter 3.2. examines the more particular and concrete traits of empathy deprivation and cruelty. Outside the philosophical and theological sphere, Taylor's extensive work in understanding human evil through evolution, the synaptic learning paradigm of

neuroscience and other well-established theoretical frameworks (233) helps in completing the definition and bring it to a contemporary scientific setting. Chapter 3.3. will bring these aspects – general and particular, philosophical and concrete, evil and cruelty – together to contemplate the consequences of evil.

3. Evil and Cruelty in *Frankenstein*

3.1. Philosophical and Theological Evil in Shelley's *Frankenstein*

This chapter examines the philosophical and theological aspects of evil presented in Mary Shelley's character Victor Frankenstein. The analysis is built on the concept of dualism in evil presented by Terry Eagleton (2010) and theories of monstrosity by Alexa Wright (2013), and it will also utilize examples of the close reading of *Frankenstein* by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2006). The analysis begins with the first aspect of evil: challenging the sacred. It will then proceed to another aspect: the removal of the meaningful. Because Frankenstein's creature is commonly (although erroneously) known as the Frankenstein monster, elements of monstrosity must be examined as well.

3.1.1. Challenging the Monopoly on the Sacred

The essence of monstrosity lies in challenging established norms. Michel Foucault has stated that "...[Monstrosity] is the kind of irregularity that calls the law into question and disables it" (qtd. in Wright 101). Besides breaking the norms, as does the monstrous body of Frankenstein's creature, true monstrosity also actively and deliberately threatens the norms, as does Victor Frankenstein's scientific overreaching. Fred Botting has written that "monsters appear in literary and political writings to signal both a terrible threat to established orders and a call to arms that demands the unification and protection of authorized values" (para. 1). Such values include the sanctity of the divine creation and the nurturing of a child: values which Victor Frankenstein challenges. Threatening established norms is not only a trait of monstrosity but also a key element of the theological definition of evil although the theological perception prefers the term "challenging the sacred" to "threatening established norms".

According to Terry Eagleton, challenging the sacred serves two aspects of evil. First, evil acts as an counteractive force to everything considered good and righteous. Secondly, evil endeavours to make void everything meaningful and form chaos without purpose instead:

> ...[E]vil unites these two conditions. One side of it – the angelic ascetic side – wants to rise above the degraded sphere of fleshliness in pursuit of the infinite. But this withdrawal of the mind from reality has the effect of striking the world empty of value. It reduces it to so much meaningless stuff, in which the demonic side of evil can then wallow. Evil always posits either too much or too little meaning – or rather it does both at the same time. (Eagleton 75)

Eagleton accentuates two coexisting but simultaneously contradictory aspects of evil: the "spiritually elevated" and the "corrosively cynical" (103). Evil thus acts both as the demonic counterpart of the sacred (evil striving to liberate itself from limitations) and then again as the hollow tainting of meaningful matter (evil wanting to revel in chaos). Monstrous attacks on established norms represent the same phenomenon – although from a different scientific perspective.

In the case of Victor Frankenstein it is not the sacred (such as creation) that is attempted to be destroyed but the secrecy and unattainability of it. Apparently this craving for knowledge and unparalleled success is something instinctive to him. As he describes his scientific passions to Captain Walton (the sea captain who rescues him from a shipwreck at the beginning of Shelley's novel), he mentions the delight "in investigating their [the magnificent appearance of things] causes" instead of contemplating them with a satisfied spirit. He also describes that his "[c]uriosity, earnest research to learn the hidden laws of nature, gladness akin to rapture, as they were unfolded to [him]" are amongst the "earliest sensations [he] can remember" (*F* 42): "It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn... …still my inquiries were directed

to the metaphysical, or in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world" (*F* 44). For Frankenstein, the sacred is not something to be marveled at but something to be unraveled.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who argue that Shelley's novel is a complex rewriting of Milton's themes of creation and evil, link Frankenstein's ambition to the diabolical elements in Milton's *Paradise Lost.* Gilbert and Gubar claim that the proud ventures of both Captain Walton and Victor Frankenstein are "satanic" (226). The curiosity towards learning is transformed into destructive compulsions as Frankenstein later on describes: "always having been imbued with a fervent longing to *penetrate* the secrets of nature", "*penetrate* into the recesses of nature" and to reveal "how she works in her hiding-places" (*F* 57, my italics). Frankenstein describes how the "intense labour and wonderful discoveries of modern philosophers" leave him "discontented and unsatisfied" (*F* 46). He feels a fervent need to reach further, gazing upon "the fortifications and impediments that seemed to keep human beings from entering the citadel of nature (*F* 47), as he tells Captain Walton in hindsight. The quest towards reaching this citadel seems to him a proud and almost noble one: a challenge to the limitations of the sacred. Frankenstein dreams of achieving far more and to "pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation" (*F* 57).

Frankenstein's ambitions of challenging the sacred resemble evil but do not yet render chaos or suffering. It is his actions that lead him to chaos. Hence, his contemplation does not amount to evil but his determination to act on his impulses does. Gilbert and Gubar claim that in his ambitious labor Victor begins to metamorphose from Adam to Satan (231) as he aims to ignore God's monopoly on creation and rise above the restrictions of nature and God. They also suggest that Frankenstein's story of producing "a monster" resembles the stories of fallen angels by Milton and Marlowe "in much the same way that Milton's Satan's swelled head

produced Sin" (231). Whereas Satan challenged the sacred by producing Sin, Victor Frankenstein challenges the sacred by producing his creature.

Victor Frankenstein's crime is not only that of challenging God's sacred monopoly on creation but also that of disregarding the integrity of the dead. *Frankenstein* offers limited information on the details of grave robbing and corpse dissecting, using euphemisms such as "successfully collecting and arranging [his] materials" (*F* 65), but some passages do offend the moral sense, such as the following descriptions: "Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay?" (*F* 66):

> I collected bones from charnel-houses and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame. In a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and staircase, I kept my workshop of filthy creation… . The dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials... (*F* 66)

Besides "torturing living animals", Frankenstein commits the sin of grave robbing and challenges the sanctity connected with the peaceful rest of the dead. Victor explains in his narration how his father raised him not to be influenced by "supernatural horrors" or to fear "the apparition for a spirit" (*F* 62). He states that "a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life" (*F* 62). Frankenstein's upbringing was most probably meant to save him from superstitious fears but resulted in him transcending normal behavior and defying established norms: one of the indicators of evil or monstrous behavior. Gilbert and Gubar take a step further in analysing Frankenstein's crimes by claiming that the application of "the instruments of life" to his creation actually means coupling with the creature. According to Gilbert and Gubar, this continues the streak of incestuous relationships depicted in Shelley's novels, similar to the incestuous relationship of Satan and Sin (229). It is a very bold and

debatable claim, but should one agree, it would further demonstrate the indifference Victor has to the integrity of the dead. Later, while creating a bride for his creature, Victor describes finding his labor in constructing another creature "horrible and irksome" and "a filthy process", which he has to enter "in cold blood", his heart sickening "with obscure forebodings of evil" (F 208). However, there is no indication of moral revelations in Victor Frankenstein's narration. It is the labor itself that disgusts him, not the aspect of disrespecting the deceased or challenging God. It is possible that the only "horrible and irksome" aspect of his labors is the fear of another failure, considering that he managed to surpass similar feelings of disgust while constructing the original creature.

Victor's crimes against the sanctity of creation manifest themselves in the visible frame of his creation. However, the change from appearance to behavior in monster studies helps to re-examine the creature's disfigurement in *Frankenstein*. The creature's appalling frame has generally been seen as evidence of his innate wickedness. Currently it is seen as evidence of the creator's mischiefs. While creating a new form of life, Victor fantasizes: "A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs" (*F* 65). He succeeds in creating a new lifeform yearning for his acceptance but fails in creating a beautiful being. The "monster's" corpse-like appearance challenges and threatens established norms. Besides the disturbing visual link to death, it is the breaking of the Aristotelian "Great Chain of Being" or *Scala Naturae* through scientific efforts that reputedly make the creature monstrous. He represents an "unnatural product of philosophical overreaching" (Brooks para. 33). "Unnatural births" are also relevant in posthumanist bioethics. Nayar states that the question of origins is one of the most argued issues in bioethical debate (156). Creatures born in a laboratory, such as the one in *Frankenstein,* have formerly been classified as monstrous due to the unnatural process of their birth (118). As science

evolves and procedures such as in vitro fertilization, cloning and gene testing evolve, so do perceptions of "unnatural" births. Fictional narratives such as the novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005) by Kazuo Ishiguro and the movie *Blade Runner* (1982) challenge the monstrosity of clones and androids. The discourse also challenges the monstrosity of Frankenstein's creature and questions the moral of the scientist.

Concerning unnatural origins, Marie-Hélène Huet has studied the Renaissance concept of "maternal interference" on a monstrous infant. It was believed that instead of resembling the father (which is natural and appropriate), a monstrous child demonstrates the interference of "violent female desires" and "female imagination" which have "moved the mother" at the time of conception and pregnancy (Huet 2). A somewhat similar interference is described in *Frankenstein*, though not through a conflict of paternal image and maternal interference but in the opposites of natural creation and the interference of science. Instead of reproducing a normal human image, the appearance of Frankenstein's creature bears witness to the "violent desire" that moved the scientist. In a feminist reading of *Frankenstein*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have associated this "horror story of maternity" (222) with *Frankenstein* stating that Shelley describes the creation using expressions associated with pain and exhaustion of childbirth (232). They also state that Victor's crimes resembling Satanic pride are not of the masculine and Byronic type but those of "the curiously female, outcast Satan who gave birth to Sin" (233). Since fictional females have classically been portrayed either as angelic or monstrous (Gilbert 240) and the main female characters in *Frankenstein* represent the virtuous type, the monstrous female curiosity is presented in the actions of Victor Frankenstein. The production of the monster in Shelley's novel thus represents a monstrous act of intentional defiance to human and natural laws. The violations visible in "the monster's" body are not, however, of his own making but those of his creator, Victor Frankenstein.

Besides birth, monstrosity has traditionally been associated with death: in literary tradition, evil characters are usually those who seek to challenge the notion of death itself (Eagleton 82), either avoiding it or embracing it in a wrong manner (Eagleton 70–71). A prime example of this is found in the *Harry Potter* series in the form of Lord Voldemort's Horcruxes (vessels for his soul which are created to prevent his death). According to Eagleton, the unnatural stance towards death is a result of excess pride and unwillingness to "bow the knee to the finite, least of all to their own creatureliness" (26). He adds that pride is a characteristic Satanic vice making evildoers "so terrified of death, which is the absolute limit of the human" (Eagleton 26). Even before robbing graves to collect material for his experiments, Victor Frankenstein demonstrates a hostile attitude towards death. While his mother is lying on her deathbed and embraces her fate with the words "I will endeavour to resign myself cheerfully to death and will indulge a hope of meeting you in another world" (*F* 51), Frankenstein avoids discussing "that most irreparable evil, the void that presents itself to the soul, and the despair that is exhibited on the countenance" (*F* 51). According to Frankenstein, her mother "passed away calmly, and her countenance expressed affection even in death" (*F* 51). Victor himself voices an opposite attitude towards death: to him it is an evil opponent. Besides "penetrating the mysteries of nature", Frankenstein ultimately aims at conquering death: "...what glory would attend the discovery if I could banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death" (*F* 47); "I might in process of time (although I now found it impossible) renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" (*F* 65). His rhetoric is not only sublime and proud but also shows signs of aggression: "Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first *break through*, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world" (*F* 65, my italics). In his quest to pour light into a dark world Victor might be aiming for good, but in his methods and choice of opponent he represents aspects of evil and monstrousness, thus challenging the sacred barrier between life and death.

After his creature is set loose and his ambitions have failed him, Frankenstein's attitude towards death changes from hostility to a secret longing. Frankenstein admits to Captain Walton that he is "overcome by gloom and misery", often considering that he "had better seek death than desire to remain in a world which to [him] was replete with wretchedness". According to him, only "an unceasing attendance and vigilance" restrains him "from committing some dreadful act of violence" (*F* 226). In refusing to commit suicide (which is a mortal sin) Frankenstein might demonstrate some understanding of moral codes. Nevertheless, his narration might be a method of gaining sympathy from his listener, Captain Walton.

3.1.2. The Removal of the Meaningful

Evil does not only aim to *challenge* the sacred. The second aspect of evil presented by Terry Eagleton is the *complete removal* of anything meaningful. Evil has thus been perceived as "a purposeless or nonpragmatic wickedness" "not primarily concerned with practical consequences" (Eagleton 103), and even "supremely pointless" (Eagleton 84). In other words, evil aims to nullify and annihilate all things that are meaningful but does not replace the void with new meaning or purpose. Evil merely "reign[s] sovereign in the void left behind" (Eagleton 118). Throughout Victor Frankenstein's narration it is evident that he does not aim for a meaningless void but for scientific glory: "...my imagination was too much exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man" (*F* 64). In addition to having remarkable objectives, he has remarkable trust in his own capabilities. However, as he fails to create a beautiful being he rejects the creature altogether and abandons his ambitions. What remains of his scientific discoveries is a hollow and painful apathy described in detail in the following chapters.

As the concepts of holiness and goodness are associated with meaning and purpose, Eagleton associates evil with futility and meaninglessness (13). Good is also associated with serenity and contentment as opposed to the restlessness of evil will, eternally "sullen and dissatisfied" (Eagleton 65). Chapter 3.3. will further examine Frankenstein's sufferings resulting from the the creation of his "monster". However, the initial lack of serenity and contentment in his character is an important factor in analysing the evil within him. Frankenstein describes how his temper as a child was "sometimes violent" and his "passions vehement" in addition to not being satisfied with admiring the secret wonders of nature. This "temperature", as he calls it, does not turn to turns to "childish pursuits" but to "an eager desire to learn, and not to learn all things indiscriminately" (*F* 43–44). Afterwards he recognizes the corrosive power of his maniacal pursuits and describes how he "sometimes grew alarmed at the wreck [he] perceived that [he] had become" while "the energy of [his] purpose alone sustained [him]…" (*F* 68) and how the hard work "lasting nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body" results in him being deprived of rest and health (*F* 70). The manner in which his scientific obsessions become harmful to his own health and well-being demonstrates the corruptive effects of evil actions. Frankenstein warns his friend, Captain Walton (who is eager to discover the mysteries of the North Pole), saying: "If the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human mind." (*F* 67) For himself, the revelation comes too late.

Shelley offers an interesting contrast to Victor's unsatisfied mind in the character of the unnamed creature. It is evident that he, unlike Victor, aspires to harmonious connections with other living beings. He announces to his creator: "If any being felt emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them a hundred and a hundredfold; for that one creature's sake I

would make peace with the whole kind!" (*F* 184) Despite his seclusion and violent encounters with humans, the creature desires companionship (*F* 183) and shows benevolence even towards total strangers: "I rushed from my hiding-place and with extreme labour, from the force of the current, saved her and dragged her [a stranger he sees drowning] to shore" (*F* 177). Thus, the creature represents the exact opposite of Victor's "fall to evil". Although he has had a horrendous life, the creature aims to kindness and diplomacy. Victor, however, turns to crimes against creation and the integrity of the dead although he has has a nurtured childhood, destroying not only his own life but also those of numerous others.

Both Taylor and Eagleton have speculated on what makes evil fascinating (Taylor 214–215, Eagleton 120). Eagleton claims that the puritan propaganda of "prudence, chastity, abstinence, sobriety, meekness, frugality, obedience, and self-discipline" understandably makes evil a "sexier" option (120). At the same time this dichotomy represents an almost noble intention to break free from the restrictions of the sacred, at the same time it demonstrates a bored stance on virtuousness. Victor Frankenstein was apparently brought up in a very virtuous environment. He was a cherished child of parents who were "closely united in bonds of devoted affection", demonstrating the "sense of justice" in his father's "upright mind which rendered it necessary that he should approve highly to love strongly" (*F* 37). Victor Frankenstein praises his father's "integrity and indefatigable attention to public business" and his mother's "greatest tenderness" and "mind of uncommon mould" (*F* 36). Gilbert and Gubar have also described Victor's childhood as "Edenic", foreshadowing his inevitable Fall, in their comparison between *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Lost* (230). Victor's future wife completes the perfect and beautiful family accordingly. Frankenstein describes his fiancée as follows:

> [Elizabeth's] brow was clear and ample, her blue eyes cloudless, and her lips and the moulding of her face so expressive of sensibility and sweetness that none could behold

> her without looking on her as of a distinct species, a being heaven-sent, and bearing a celestial stamp in all her features. (*F* 39)

Such an amount of virtuous happiness might bore the curious mind of Victor Frankenstein. Terry Eagleton states that if someone finds their life growing "stale and insipid", it might inspire them to aspire to the forbidden, extreme and unspeakable in order to "make an effect" (69). There are no obvious indications in Victor Frankenstein's narration that he would intentionally defy the virtuous life he led in Geneva. However, he does exhibit an Eagletonian type of boredom stating that "[p]artly from curiosity and partly from idleness, I went into the lecturing room" in Ingolstadt (*F* 55). He is thus driven by both urge and boredom. Him defying creation and disrespecting the dead might be an attempt to satisfy both of these needs: to satisfy the "insurrection and turmoil" in which he has "little power to produce order in" (*F* 57) and to explore worlds beyond the celestial family life. This is the duality presented in evil: claiming that inverting conventional moral values is an admirable accomplishment whilst secretly not believing in any values (Eagleton 94). This results in destroying social structures in order to find peace in emptiness but creating "a monstrous spawning of meaningless matter" (Eagleton 101) instead.

While relating his story to Captain Walton, Victor Frankenstein aims to demonstrate that he is not a malevolent being. Frankenstein exhibits some happiness in tranquility and peacefulness as well as desperation when lacking such emotions. Before relocating to Ingolstadt and initiating his gruesome scientific experiments, he remembers being "strangers to any species of disunion or dispute" with his fiancée, Elizabeth. He claims that "[h]armony was the soul of our companionship, and the diversity and contrast that subsisted in our characters drew us nearer together" (*F* 42). After his experiment of creating a beautiful new being fails, he meets the subsequent "void of meaninglessness" with a deep state of unhappiness. It is debatable if Frankenstein finds a sort of martyr-like and distorted

gratification in this sullenness as he utilizes multiple poetic descriptions to express his suffering. Perhaps the evil do not always face a void of meaninglessness with a maniacal laugh but with profound self-pity. However, Victor Frankenstein does narrate incidents where a temporary easing of discomfort is either aimed at or welcomed. After surviving his first encounter with the creature and receiving care and aid from a friend, Frankenstein praises the "divine spring" contributing "greatly to [his] convalescence" (*F* 76). During this time he feels "sentiments of joy and affection" reviving and his gloom disappearing (*F* 76). He continues: "...in a short time I became as cheerful as before I was attacked by the fatal passion" (*F* 76). Frankenstein is glad to have regained his spirits. Returning home to his family, Victor narrates becoming "the same happy creature who, a few years ago, loved and beloved by all, had no sorrow or care" (*F* 86). After some time he also claims to have been "formed for peaceful happiness" and that during his "youthful days discontent never visited [his] mind, and if [he] was ever overcome by ennui, the sight of what is beautiful in nature or the study of what is excellent and sublime in the productions of man could always interest [his] heart and communicate elasticity to [his] spirits" (*F* 203). He contrasts this to his state of being "a miserable spectacle of wrecked humanity, pitiable to others and intolerable to [himself]" (*F* 203). Frankenstein's earlier narration of having an ardent passion to "penetrate the secrets of nature" however contradicts the claim of being formed for peaceful happiness. His curiosity makes him restless and introverted, not someone "never visited" by discontent, even before traveling to Ingolstadt.

The death of his brother is a vital turning point for Frankenstein. It results in sullenness which no consolation can remove. However, there are descriptions of moments when the grief lessens. Before encountering his creature for the second time, Victor seeks refuge in the mountains and lakes of Switzerland, claiming: "[t]hese sublime and magnificent scenes afforded me the greatest consolation that I was capable of receiving. They elevated me from

all littleness of feeling, and although they did not remove my grief, they subdued and tranquilized it." (*F* 119) At this point the natural marvels do not challenge Victor but ease his restlessness. As a circle of violence and revenge ensues, Frankenstein finds less and less consolation for his grief. However, Frankenstein acknowledges aid when he is offered it. The loss of his friend Henry Clerval, killed by Victor's own monstrous creation, is a severe one. A letter he receives from Elizabeth lets "some softened feelings steal into [his] heart", daring "to whisper paradisiacal dreams of love and joy" although "the apple was already eaten, and the angel's arm bared to drive [him] from all hope" (*F* 239). To help with his turmoil, Frankenstein confesses to using small doses of laudanum every night, "for it was by means of this drug only that [he is] enabled to gain the rest necessary for the preservation of life" (*F* 233). It is therefore evident that Frankenstein does not revel in the destruction he has created – he suffers because of it. This argument is supported by what Victor says to Captain Walton while lying on his deathbed: "...my fate is nearly fulfilled. I wait but for one event, and then I shall repose in peace" (*F* 31). Eagleton states that evil beyond the superficial element of the gross is, in fact, boring because of its lifelessness that is trapped between life and death (123), "without real substance" and "philistine, kitsch-ridden, and banal" (124). Frankenstein feels this lifelessness and lack of substance heavily. Evil is bound to result in chaos and suffering, and such is the case with Victor Frankenstein as well. Frankenstein describes his own fall from challenging the divine to the void of meaninglessness as follows: "I felt the bitterness of disappointment; dreams that had been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space were now become a hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!" (*F* 71). Frankenstein thus offers the reader a prime example of Eagleton's definition of evil actions and their consequences.

3.2. Psychological Evil in Shelley's *Frankenstein*

3.2.1. Cruelty as Self Protection

Many theoreticians argue that evil actions and cruelty stem from self protection. However, instead of protecting one's physical immunity, people who commit cruel acts often do so while protecting their self-images and belief systems from symbolic threats. Kathleen Taylor analyzes this type of behavior providing neuroscientific explanations: there exist some evolutionary threats (provoking anger, fear or disgust) to which human beings are genetically programmed to react either by avoidance or annihilation (71–72). However, as human beings have developed sophisticated symbolic thinking, the threat responses that are supposed to protect humans from predators or poisoning are now also activated by symbolic threats such as humiliation (Taylor 175).

This shift from tangible to symbolic threats is a strong element in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.* Victor Frankenstein first perceives his creature as an unrestrainable and mysterious force of destruction but nevertheless continues to feel anger and disgust towards him even after the imminent threat is removed – or at least diminished. The communication between him and his creature offers Frankenstein an opportunity to adjust his beliefs about the hideous looking but rational and peace-seeking creature. He however fails to do so which leads to severe consequences. Taylor states that it is natural to feel anxiety when one's predictions are challenged or proven wrong considering that in the past, the human ability to make successful predictions of one's surroundings helped to prevent being eaten by predators, swept away by a flood or poisoned (Taylor 83). Being proven wrong causes neurological stress and is attempted to be avoided by most people – even though many current threats posed to human beings are symbolic rather than physical and being mistaken in such cases hardly ever exposes humans to physical danger (Taylor 84). Victor refusing to adapt a new mindset is hence not

extraordinary, especially as the failure of his scientific experimentation causes him symptoms such as “breathless horror and disgust” (*F* 70) as well as a “nervous fever” which confines him to bed rest “for several months” (*F* 75). According to Taylor, the more important a prediction or belief is to someone and the more resources are invested in generating such prediction, the more stressful it feels to challenge it (84). A person might be considerably reliant on the truthfulness of his beliefs and thus even the thought of the emotional and cognitive effort required to challenge a prediction might feel excessively painful – even when the individual might benefit from the change (Taylor 84).

Frankenstein’s creature first challenges his creator’s carefully developed self-image as a great scientist by not being a successful creation. Subsequently, the creature challenges Frankenstein’s stable belief systems of virtuousness by being rational and humane despite his supposedly monstrous appearance. According to Roy F. Baumeister, protecting one’s self-image and belief systems (such as Victor Frankenstein’s belief in his scientific merits and the human monopoly on rationality) may lead to cruelty or evil acts (such as Victor Frankenstein repeatedly abandoning his creature). Baumeister argues that when people feel that their “favorable views of themselves are threatened or disputed by others”, violence ensues (35). This argument connects evil with egotism and solipsism. Self-protection from symbolic threats, according to Baumeister, might cause evil if people attack those who “insult, criticize or humiliate them” (20). This chapter demonstrates the measures which Victor Frankenstein takes to defend his solipsistic and erroneous belief systems from symbolic threats.

Victor Frankenstein’s self-image is strong and secure. Concluding from his narration, Frankenstein does not seem to find anyone equal to him in attributes, achievements or even woes. Frankenstein’s sense of superiority demonstrates a solipsistic mindset. Simon Baron Cohen links solipsistic thinking to empathy by stating that a lack of empathy results from being ignorant to the existence of other points of view (43). The ignorance results in believing in a

total rightness of one's beliefs and judging anyone with different views as "wrong" or "stupid" (43). Terry Eagleton argues that evil is associated with "a touch of privilege": "better to fall than not be at the top at all" (Eagleton 55). When Victor is lying in his deathbed, his monologue demonstrates this touch of privilege:

> "When younger… I believed myself destined for some great enterprise. My feelings are profound, but I possessed a coolness of judgment that fitted me for illustrious achievements. This sentiment of the worth of my nature supported me when others would have been oppressed, for I deemed it criminal to throw away in useless grief those talents that might be useful to my fellow creatures. When I reflected on the work I had completed, no less a one than the creation of a sensitive and rational animal, I could not rank myself with the herd of common projectors… . My imagination was vivid, yet my powers of analysis and application were intense; by the union of these qualities I conceived the idea and executed the creation of a man. Even now I cannot recollect without passion my reveries while the work was incomplete. I trod heaven in my thoughts, now exulting in my powers, now burning with the idea of their effects. From my infancy I was imbued with high hopes and a lofty ambition; but how am I sunk!" (*F* 267)

Victor Frankenstein is clearly not a humble man – which also means that has a lot to defend from challenging views.

Victor Frankenstein offers plenty of examples of his superiority. He describes his favourite books as "treasures known to few besides myself" (*F* 46) and academic success by stating: "My ardour was indeed the astonishment of the students, and my proficiency that of the masters" (*F* 60–61). As he ventures deeper into the mysteries of creation he exclaims: "...I was surprised that among so many men of genius who had directed their inquiries towards the same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret" (*F* 63). Along

with his intelligence, Frankenstein takes pride in his remarkable resilience: "'I have one secret, Elizabeth, a dreadful one; when revealed to you, it will chill your frame with horror, and then, far from being surprised at my misery, you will only wonder that I survive what I have endured'" (*F* 240). Equal admiration for his endurance is also present as he describes to Walton his determination to find "the monster": "My courage and perseverance were invigorated by these scoffing words [those of the town magistrate]; I resolved not to fail in my purpose, and calling on heaven to support me, I continued with unabated fervour to traverse immense deserts, until the ocean appeared at a distance and formed the utmost boundary of the horizon" (*F* 260). There is also a hint of privilege in the depictions of Victor's wretchedness: "...no creature had ever been so miserable as I was; so frightful an event is single in the history of man" (*F* 250); "I trembled with excess of agitation as I said this; there was a frenzy in my manner, and something, I doubt not, of that haughty fierceness which the martyrs of old are said to have possessed" (*F* 254). Victor does not only live an abnormally intense life having (according to himself) "a heart overflowed with kindness and the love of virtue" (*F* 111), he also suffers intensely.

Victor Frankenstein's high self-image is not limited to his attributes and emotions but extends to his observations and conclusions. Even when Victor has little tangible evidence to support his theories, they represent the absolute truth to him. For example, after the first sighting of his creature since leaving Ingolstadt, he concludes that the creature must be guilty of his brother's murder saying that the "mere presence of the idea was an irresistible proof of the fact" (*F* 93). Frankenstein is in fact correct on this occasion, but the unwavering trust in his own intuitions also contributes to a tragedy: on his wedding night, Victor fails to consider the possibility that his creature could prey on anyone else but him. He assumes that the creature is fixated on him alone and thus leaves his newlywed bride unprotected and unaware of the assailant: "I passed an hour in this state of mind, when suddenly I reflected how fearful the

combat which I momentarily expected would be to my wife, and I earnestly entreated her to retire, resolving not to join her until I had obtained some knowledge as to the situation of my enemy" (*F* 247). Although Victor's prideful solipsism might not amount to evil actions in this incident, it leads to violence and grief.

As previously stated, Victor Frankenstein's solipsistic thinking reaches dangerous heights when he fails to consider the safety of others. Besides leaving his newlywed bride vulnerable to assault, he initially fails to warn anyone of his creature who he believes to be malevolent. When his close friend Henry Clerval meets him after his failed experiment, Victor declares: "'I have lately been so deeply engaged in one occupation that I have not allowed myself sufficient rest, as you see; but I hope, I sincerely hope, that all these employments are now at an end and that I am at length free'" (*F* 73). Victor fears the creature immensely and calls him a monster but does not take sufficient procedures to protect others from him. When Victor loses sight of the creature he considers himself free. When departing for Scotland he is certain that the monster will only pursue him: "During my absence I should leave my friends unconscious of the existence of their enemy and unprotected from his attacks, exasperated as he might be by my departure. But he had promised to follow me wherever I might go, and would he not accompany me to England? This imagination was dreadful in itself, but soothing inasmuch as it supposed the safety of my friends." (*F* 194) Frankenstein decides to leave his friends unarmed and unaware of the existence of a possible threat. After observing his creature for the first time since leaving Ingolstadt, Victor fears being perceived as a madman if he tells people about the "monster", claiming that the story and "its astounding horror would be looked upon as madness by the vulgar" (*F* 98). Even after the creature has murdered his brother as well as his best friend and threatened to attack again on his wedding night, Frankenstein persists in keeping his secret and and maintains "a continual silence concerning the wretch" because he has a "persuasion that [he] should be supposed mad" which "itself would forever have

chained [his] tongue" (*F* 235). He claims to control his "impatient thirst for sympathy" and remain silent instead of confiding to the world his "fatal secret" (*F* 235) because of his reputation and ego. It would seem that a symbolic threat to his self-image weighs more to him than the physical threat to his loved ones.

Victor Frankenstein's high self-image is demonstrated not only in how it raises him above other people but also in how it secludes him from others. Despite his rhetorical and social abilities he is in fact remarkably introverted, making his self-image and belief systems even less susceptible to challenging views. Frankenstein's solitude is the result of pride, not shyness, and might be interpreted as a threat response to being proved wrong. Eagleton claims that dependency on others is human and that "pure autonomy is a dream of evil" (12). As evil is associated with an inability to be influenced or changed, Victor making himself unreachable makes him more fearsome and uncontrollable. His tendency to prefer solitude is evident in many passages of his narration: "It was my temper to avoid a crowd and to attach myself fervently to a few. I was indifferent, therefore, to my school-fellows in general..." (*F* 43). Although he claims to be attached to a few people, Victor repeatedly secludes himself from these closest friends as well: "I shunned the face of man; all sound of joy or complacency was torture to me; solitude was my only consolation – deep, dark, deathlike solitude" (*F* 111–112); "I took refuge in the most perfect solitude. I passed whole days on the lake alone in a little boat..." (*F* 189–190). Besides seeking solitude, he refuses to share his inner turmoil with his loved ones when they try to approach him: "My father's care and attentions were indefatigable, but he did not know the origin of my sufferings and sought erroneous methods to remedy the incurable ill" (*F* 234). His misfortunes are beyond even his closest relatives and friends.

Events which could potentially draw Victor closer to his peers in mourning further seclude him. An example of this emerges after a close family friend is convicted of William Frankenstein's murder: "I saw an insurmountable barrier placed between me and my fellow

men; this barrier was sealed with the blood of William and Justine, and to reflect on the events connected with those names filled my soul with anguish" (*F* 200). The consolation offered to Frankenstein's grief (which is also shared by his loved ones) has little or no effect on him. He claims: "[his father's] advice [of socializing more], although good, was totally inapplicable to my case" (*F* 112); "Thus not the tenderness of friendship, nor the beauty of earth, nor of heaven, could redeem my soul from woe; the very accents of love were ineffectual. I was encompassed by a cloud which no beneficial influence could penetrate" (*F* 116). Frankenstein continues, however: "He [his father] wished me to seek amusement in society. I abhorred the face of man. Oh, not abhorred! They were my brethren, my fellow beings, and I felt attracted even to the most repulsive among them, as to creatures of an angelic nature and celestial mechanism. But I felt that I had no right to share their intercourse." (*F* 234) These conflicting narratives of Frankenstein leave the reader confused whether he truly appreciates his closest friends as he claims to ("dear not only through habit and association, but from their own merits" {*F* 268}), or does he only argue so in order to impress Captain Walton and construct an image of a loving and caring person.

While he prepares himself for the creation of a new being, he rationalizes his seclusion suggesting it is for the benefit of his loved ones: "I was aware also that I should often lose all self-command, all capacity of hiding the harrowing sensations that would possess me during the progress of my unearthly occupation. I must absent myself from all I loved while thus employed" (*F* 192). Nevertheless, while Victor refuses to share his ordeals and resists consolation from his closest friends, he also suffers from the self-inflicted loneliness: "...no one was near me who soothed me with the gentle voice of love; no dear hand supported me" (*F* 226). Such prideful seclusion is something Victor has criticized when demonstrated by another being. When Victor is telling Captain Walton the story of his parents, he describes his father's destitute friend who has taken refuge far away from his companions: "He [Victor's father]

bitterly deplored the false pride which led his friend to a conduct so little worthy of the affection that united them" (*F* 36). The lesson is one he has not learnt himself – perhaps because he feels to be above it. If the seclusion from his family and friends is indeed a threat response to being proven erroneous, he might fear that admitting his scientific overreaching would not result in compassion and consolation but in blaming. His loved ones might not see him as a victim but as someone who must make amends. This would challenge his self-image as the guiltless sufferer – a role he emphasizes to Captain Walton in his narration.

A substantial part of Victor Frankenstein's self-image is indeed the idea of himself as a victim. Roy F. Baumeister has stated that as a part of self-defence from symbolic threats, perpetrators of cruel or evil acts usually do not consider their own actions evil (11). Kathleen Taylor points out that, much like victims, perpetrators may present themselves as reasonable and likeable people in order to gain empathy **–** not only by facts but also by lying, blurring memories and convincing even themselves of their own innocence (47). Taylor adds that for perpetrators (who usually are highly egocentric characters), one favourite strategy in seeking justification is to focus on themselves rather than their victims (48). Such is the case of Victor Frankenstein who aims to protect his self-image from blame and guilt emphasizing his part as a victim: "I felt as if I had committed some great crime, the consciousness of which haunted me. *I was guiltless*, but I had indeed drawn down a horrible curse upon my head, as mortal as that of crime" (*F* 205, my italics). On his deathbed he relates his life story to his new friend, Walton, claiming: "During these last days I have been occupied in examining my past conduct; *nor do I find it blamable*. In a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a rational creature and was bound towards him to assure, as far as was in my power, his happiness and well-being" (*F* 274, my italics). Victor Frankenstein's claims of being concerned for his creature's happiness are evidently untrue. Nevertheless, they are crucial in supporting his self-image as a benevolent person.

Considering how Captain Walton is smitten with his new friend, Victor Frankenstein can clearly act in a very alluring way. The amount Walton's praises is almost comical. Victor receives descriptions such as: "[w]hat a glorious creature must he have been in the days of his prosperity, when he is thus noble and *godlike* in ruin!" (*F* 267, my italics). There is an abundance of complimentary remarks on Frankenstein and "the extraordinary merits of this wonderful man" (*F* 31) who is not only celestial in countenance but also "although unhappy... ...not so utterly occupied by his own misery but [interested] deeply in the projects of others" (*F* 29). Walton finds himself endeavouring to "discover what quality it is which he possesses that elevates him so immeasurably above any other person" he has ever known (*F* 31). He deduces it to be "an intuitive discernment, a quick but never-failing power of judgment, a penetration into the causes of things, unequalled for clearness and precision; add to this a facility of expression and a voice whose varied intonations are *soul-subduing music*" (*F* 31, my italics). Walton's love for his new friend seems somewhat overstated, but numerous examples of such charisma exist in the history of mankind. The "saint-like" Frankenstein does admit to some degree of guilt at times but only when associated with, for example, his "prophetic soul" being "torn by remorse, horror, and despair" (*F* 110), or the "never-dying worm alive in [his] bosom, which allowed of no hope or consolation" (*F* 109). Many researchers, such as Baron Cohen, offer ample information on convincing but misleading amiability linking it to narcissistic personality disorder. However, diagnosing Victor Frankenstein would be problematic to say the least. It is true that people with, for example, antisocial personality disorder or narcissism are easily described as evil (Baron Cohen 67), and many famous criminals have been diagnosed with psychopathy or narcissism, but here a line must be drawn between psychology and literature. Although some attributes of mental disorders might help understand such characters better, making definitive diagnoses of fictional characters who the authors themselves have not diagnosed is hardly conductive.

Victor Frankenstein justifies his self-image as a victim by downplaying his own agency and focusing on hard determinism – issues Kathleen Taylor has examined when studying cruelty (48). To protect his guiltless self-image, Victor blames his dramatic ruin on destiny rather than his own actions. For example, as Victor is telling his story to the sea captain, he describes "those events which led, by insensible steps, to [his] tale of misery" (*F* 45). His passion "which afterwards ruled [his] destiny" arose, "like a mountain river" becoming "the torrent which, in its course, has swept away all [his] hopes and joys" (*F* 45). Victor finds his "soul constructed" "thus strangely", that by "such slight ligaments" he is "bound to prosperity or ruin" and depicts how "destiny was too potent, and her immutable laws had decreed [his] utter and terrible destruction" (*F* 49). Victor also claims to see wicked omens in nature, as the darkness of the night and the dark mountains compose "a vast and dim scene of evil", which makes him foresee that he is "destined to become the most wretched of human beings" (*F* 91). Although he narrates having "prophesied truly", he could not have conceived "the hundredth part of anguish" he was "destined to endure" (*F* 91). Frankenstein also sees his mother's death as "an omen" (*F* 50) of his future miseries thus taking over a family tragedy to explain his own downfall. His miseries are not the only events explained by divine interference. Mundane events such as meeting his natural philosophy professor represent "chance – or rather the evil influence, the Angel of Destruction, which asserted omnipotent sway over me from the moment I turned my reluctant steps from my father's door" (*F* 54), and his first discussion with the professor represents "... the words of the fate – enounced to destroy me" (*F* 57). It is significant how the word "destiny" is a repeating element in his narration. It is this omnipotent force that causes his miseries, not his own decisions and actions.

However, it is not only maniacal enthusiasm and divine intervention that guide Victor's unwilling character. Some blame, according to Frankenstein, can be found in the beings surrounding him. When communicating with his creature for the first time Victor exclaims:

"You have left me no power to consider whether I am just to you or not" (*F* 125) and later describes his own error of judgement that led to the death of his bride as follows: "But, as if possessed of magic powers, the monster had blinded me to his real intentions; and when I thought that I had prepared only my own death, I hastened that of a far dearer victim" (*F* 242). Frankenstein does not only blame his creature for his troubles but also his father. As he narrates his scientific ambitions to Walton, Frankenstein remarks that as a child he was "left to struggle with a child's blindness, added to a student's thirst for knowledge" (*F* 47), his father not being a scientific man. He goes further by saying: "If... my father had taken the pains to explain to me... I should certainly have thrown Agrippa aside [a pseudo scientific book Frankenstein was infatuated with] and have contented my imagination... It is even possible that the train of my ideas would never have received the fatal impulse that led to my ruin" (*F* 45–46). At times when Victor claims to feel remorse, it is strongly connected to the sense of inevitable destiny. For example, when Frankenstein describes his wretchedness (though not the reasons for it) to his father, he says: "'Alas! My father,' said I, 'how little do you know me. Human beings, their feelings and passions, would indeed be degraded if such a wretch as I felt pride. Justine, poor unhappy Justine, was as innocent as I, and she suffered the same charge; she died for it; and I am the cause of this—I murdered her. William, Justine, and Henry—they all died by my hands.'" (*F* 234–235) Considering the effort Victor makes to suppress his own agency, one cannot be sure if this "testimony" is a true indicator of guilt or if it falls into the category of martyr-like sympathy evoking that Frankenstein is no stranger to.

Victor Frankenstein's solipsistic pride and overreaching threat responses are not, as stated, clear illustrations of evil. Terry Eagleton, quoting the philosopher John Rawls, points out: "What moves the evil man is the love of injustice: he delights in the impotence and humiliation of those subject to him and relishes being recognized by them as the author of their degradation" (qtd. in Eagleton 94). Kathleen Taylor also draws a line between callous cruelty

(which inflicts suffering on a victim while in pursuit of other goals such as self-preservation) and sadistic cruelty (which aims at inflicting suffering because of the pleasure it causes the inflictor) (203). Taylor states that the delight of hurting is the defining characteristic of human evil (204). Eagleton takes this a step further by claiming that evil "is an example of pure disinterestedness" (93). There is no evidence in either of their narratives supporting a claim that Frankenstein or his creature would be sadistic. Their actions are motivated by threat response and revenge, and neither relish their actions. There exist theories which attempt to rank perpetrators of evil actions such as the Scale of Evil by Michael Stone (Presented in the TV-series *Most Evil* {2006}). It is also believed that there exists an intrinsic moral code within human beings specifying that sadistic cruelty is "worse" than callous cruelty (Taylor 172). However, cruelty based on threat responses and the inability to perceive the world from any other point of view than one's own has had detrimental consequences throughout human history – genocides and ethnic purges being clear examples. As demonstrated in the next chapter, Victor's egotistical tendencies and lack of empathy do not only result in his own demise but several others' as well.

3.2.2. Lack of Empathy and Otherization

Many scholars argue that the essence of human evil lies in a lack of empathy for other living beings (e.g. Baron Cohen, Baumeister, Taylor). In her analysis of human monsters, such as the serial killer Ted Bundy, Alexa Wright claims that it is the lack of empathy for his victims that makes a monster fearsome (Wright 156). Ted Bundy, for example, showed no emotion whilst confessing and describing his brutal murders (Wright 153). Baron Cohen defines empathy as follows: "*Empathy is our ability to identify what someone else is thinking or feeling and to respond to their thoughts and feelings with and appropriate emotion*" (16, original italics).

Sometimes empathy includes adapting the same mindset. A clear example of this is found in Shelley's *Frankenstein* when Frankenstein's creature describes watching and observing the DeLancey family from his hiding place: "...when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys..." (*F* 140). Baron Cohen has demonstrated how early childhood traumas and neglect have a connection with empathy disorders and, further, how a caregiver can supply an infant with an "internal pot of gold", as he calls it (70–72). This means that an affectionate parent can raise a child to have good emotional stamina and the ability to form functional and meaningful relationships. In the first chapter of Shelley's novel, Victor Frankenstein describes how his "mother's tender caresses" and his "father's smile of benevolent pleasure while regarding [him]" were his "first recollections" (*F* 38). He continues:

> I was their plaything and their idol, and something better—their child, the innocent and helpless creature bestowed on them by heaven, whom to bring up to good, and whose future lot it was in their hands to direct to happiness or misery, according as they fulfilled their duties towards me. With this deep consciousness of what they owed towards the being to which they had given life, added to the active spirit of tenderness that animated both, it may be imagined that while during every hour of my infant life I received a lesson of patience, of charity, and of self-control, I was so guided by a silken cord that all seemed but one train of enjoyment to me. (*F* 38)

It would thus seem that Victor Frankenstein should have received a substantial "internal pot of gold" from his loving parents, as "no human being could have passed a happier childhood" than Victor: his parents "were possessed by the very spirit of kindness and indulgence" (*F* 43). Frankenstein observes his parents' pattern of empathy not only for family members but also for the less fortunate, describing their philanthropy as "their benevolent disposition [which] often made them enter the cottages of the poor" (*F* 39). He continues: "This, to my mother, was more than a duty; it was a necessity, a passion… for her to act in her turn the guardian

angel to the afflicted" (*F* 39). The kind of abandonment and violent rejection Frankenstein's creature suffers could easily lead to developing a severe empathy disorder. The nurtured childhood Victor experiences could easily lead to a healthy interaction between living beings. This, however, is not the case in *Frankenstein*.

Although it can be argued that Victor Frankenstein rather demonstrates the need to showcase benevolence than actually acts benevolently, there are some indicators of his ability to empathize with others. One example can be found in chapter nine where he mourns the deaths of his little brother William and family friend Justine:

> I was tempted to plunge into the silent lake, that the waters might close over me and my calamities forever. But I was restrained, when I thought of the heroic and suffering Elizabeth, whom I tenderly loved, and whose existence was bound up in mine. I thought also of my father and surviving brother... .(*F* 113)

Instead of adapting a "single-minded" approach by thinking only from his own point of view (Baron Cohen 16), he reflects on the well-being of his family. Another example of Victor's capacity to empathize can be found when he listens to his creature's tragic tale. While telling his story to his creator, the creature states: "Pitiless as you have been towards me, I now see compassion in your eyes..." (*F* 184). Most likely, the creature does not merely imagine this compassion because Frankenstein himself states: "I was moved… I felt that there was some justice in his argument. His tale and the feelings he now expressed proved him to be a creature of fine sensations, and did I not as his maker owe him all the portion of happiness that it was in my power to bestow?" (*F* 184). Even before hearing the story of his creature, Frankenstein ponders whether or not to follow the creature into his hut:

> ... I weighed the various arguments that he had used and determined at least to listen to his tale. I was partly urged by curiosity, and *compassion* confirmed my resolution. I had hitherto supposed him to be the murderer of my brother, and I eagerly sought a

> confirmation or denial of this opinion. For the first time, also, I felt what the *duties of a creator towards his creature* were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness. These motives urged me to comply with his demand. (*F* 126, my italics)

These excerpts suggest that Victor Frankenstein is not innately incapable of empathy (although there is a possibility that he is manipulating his listener, Captain Walton, in order to gain sympathy). It is however evident that empathy is not among the strongest personal traits of Frankenstein. As discussed before, Victor is not a very sociable human being. Besides seeking solitude, he sometimes judges his fellow human beings very strictly on little information. For example, when Frankenstein begins his studies in Ingolstadt, he describes his professor Mr. Kempe as "a little squat man with a gruff voice and a repulsive countenance" (*F* 55) and as "a little conceited fellow" (*F* 56). As his studies progress, his opinion on the professor improves a little but the impolite tone does not soften: "... I found even in M. Krempe a great deal of sound sense and real information, combined, it is true, with a repulsive physiognomy and manners" (*F* 60). When Victor is convalescing in Ireland, he evaluates his caregiver as follows:

> She was a hired nurse, the wife of one of the turnkeys, and her countenance expressed all those bad qualities which often characterize that class. The lines of her face were hard and rude, like that of persons accustomed to see without sympathizing in sights of misery. Her tone expressed her entire indifference; she addressed me in English, and the voice struck me as one that I had heard during my sufferings. "Are you better now, sir?" said she. (*F* 225)

Yet another example of Victor's sense of superiority can be found after the creature has attacked Frankenstein's newlywed bride. Victor tries to persuade a Genevan magistrate "whose mind was occupied by far other ideas than those of devotion and heroism" (*F* 254) to hunt and kill the creature. It is important to note that Victor is in a state of emotional turmoil but

nevertheless the projection of his own indiscretions on the magistrate is an interesting one: "'Man,' I cried, 'how ignorant art thou in thy pride of wisdom!'" (*F* 254). It is evident that the creature is not the only living being who does not meet Victor Frankenstein's high standards of beauty, elegance and intelligence.

Nonetheless, even kinship is not a sufficient factor for Victor Frankenstein to recognize agency outside his own solipsistic self-image. Baron Cohen defines reduced empathy as ceasing to "treat another person as a person, with their own feelings, and start to treat them as an object" (182). This does not always result in callous cruelty or violence. *Frankenstein* depicts objectification also amongst family and friends. Victor Frankenstein repeatedly discusses his loved ones but at times it can be questioned how much reciprocity actually exists in these relationships. For example, when Victor indulges himself in his studies, the one-sided correspondence from Geneva to Ingolstadt is mentioned several times. A sole focus on the pursuit of one's own interests is what gives every human being the potential to be unempathetic (Cohen 8). Victor explains how his father "made no reproach in his letters and only took notice of [his] silence by inquiring into [his] occupations more particularly than before" (*F* 68). Henry Clerval mentions to Victor that "...'[his] father and cousin would be very happy if they received a letter from [him] in [his] own handwriting. They hardly know how ill [he has] been and are uneasy at [his] long silence.'" (*F* 76) While conducting his experiments, it is emphasized that Victor is engaged with is "heart and soul, in the pursuit of some discoveries which [he] hoped to make" while paying "no visit to Geneva" for two years (*F* 61).

The neglect Victor displays to his childhood home while being immersed in his studies does not concern only his immediate family but also his future wife. Besides not communicating to her over the course of several years, Victor later assumes without a doubt that Elizabeth is obedient to his wishes, communicating to her that "'I will confide this tale of misery and terror [the existence of his creature] to you the day after our marriage shall take

place… but until then, I conjure you, do not mention or allude to it. This I most earnestly entreat, and I know you will comply.'" (*F* 240). While Elizabeth suffers alongside Victor without knowing the real reason for her fiancé's emotional turmoils, Victor describes her as follows: "She was thinner and had lost much of that heavenly vivacity that had before charmed me; but her gentleness and soft looks of compassion made her a more fit companion for one blasted and miserable as I was" (*F* 240). Yet again, Victor sees her as someone whose loss of "heavenly vivacity" is a suitable match to his own miseries, not an alarming signal of distress or a request for compassion. Gilbert and Gubar claim that Elizabeth is an Eve-like character to be possessed to Victor (230–231). Elizabeth would thus be, in the eyes of Victor Frankenstein, an object to be obtained instead of an individual being. The solipsism in *Frankenstein,* according to Gilbert and Gubar, is also hinted on in the "barely disguised incest" occurring in the marriage (228) as Elizabeth was raised with Victor as his sister – or even *for* Victor as Eve was created for Adam.

The discussed failings of empathy are notable but do not as such amount to evil. What truly interests researchers of evil are reasons why people actively decide not to empathize with others. Refusing to feel empathy is not always evil, monstrous or cruel. At times it can be an essential coping mechanism for example when protecting kin from an assaulter (Taylor 173). If a loved one is being attacked, the brain usually cannot process both protecting the loved one and trying to understand what motivates the assaulter. What however can amount to evil is *refusing* to see "double-mindedly" instead of "single-mindedly" (Baron Cohen 15–16) even when it would be *beneficial* or even *necessary*. Eagleton's discussion supports this, although he does not refer to empathy erosion but to "a lack of sympathetic imagination" which means the inability to conceive what others are feeling (52). For example, responding to his creature's loneliness with compassion could be beneficial to Victor Frankenstein's well-being but he decides to continue seeing him as a malevolent monster. The conscious "single-minded"

approach leads to one of the main concepts of evil: “otherization”, also known as “demonization”, “social death”, “dehumanization”, “objectification” (Taylor 7) and “Othering” (Nayar 147). Otherization occurs when threat responses are used against an undeserving party. Nayar states that “Others” are cultural representations of “the repulsive” opposites to humans, such as “monsters, beggars, madmen, freaks, mutants, animals and the differently abled” (138). However, otherization also occurs with human beings of different races, religions and even political opinions. Interpreting the creature’s appearance as a sign of malevolence rather than Frankenstein’s incompetence as a scientist is an example of otherization. Another example is Victor blaming his failure to protect his bride on the creature’s “blinding magic powers” rather than his own solipsistic thinking. The concept of “the Other” is not only psychological but also philosophical. Emmanuel Levinas, for example, has famously argued that ethical behavior is founded on the respect towards “the otherness of the Other” (Phelan 2013; Levinas 1969). This respect is an attribute that Victor Frankenstein evidently lacks.

Otherization relates to the concept of the essence trap: our own misdemeanours are explained as errors or misjudgements but similar actions by people we dislike happen because of their malevolent character – less changeable, less morally redeemable and more responsible (Taylor 9). Baumeister’s theories support this, describing evil as a force universally thought to rise outside one’s own sphere and belong to foreigners or people otherwise different (27). Since Frankenstein’s creature resembles a human being only vaguely, he is an easy target for otherization. In addition, many perpetrators of cruel acts feel it necessary to disregard the victim’s suffering in order to continue their course of action (Baumeister 9). This can be achieved by, for example, generating beliefs or emotions which prevent feeling empathy towards the victim (Taylor 188). Disregarding the victim results in callousness: deliberately using otherization to ignore the victim’s suffering or to downplay their capacity to feel (Taylor

57). Victor Frankenstein, for example, is given a thorough testimonial of his creature's emotional capacity but nevertheless continues to perceive the creature merely as a malevolent fiend.

As stated, Frankenstein does feel some compassion towards his creature but eventually suppresses it. The creature exclaims: "'How inconstant are your feelings! But a moment ago you were moved by my representations, and why do you again harden yourself to my complaints?'" (*F* 185). Although it is quite difficult to conclude from Victor's narration why he behaves as he does, a callous and deliberate single-mindedness is clearly evident in his attitude towards the creature. Is it the creature's abhorrent appearance that prevents Frankenstein from sympathizing with him? A passage in which he listens to his creature's story would suggest so:

> I compassionated him and sometimes felt a wish to console him, but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred. I tried to stifle these sensations; I thought that as I could not sympathize with him, I had no right to withhold from him the small portion of happiness which was yet in my power to bestow. (*F* 185)

A theory by Kathleen Taylor explains Victor's prejudices concerning his creature's monstrous appearance: "...people labelled as weak, treacherous, selfish, or disgusting 'Others' are most threatening when they challenge those stereotypes – by displaying strength, being trustworthy, showing kindness, or evoking the instinctive warmth and concern required in order to overcome disgust" (165). This is why the ability of a "monster" to feel human emotions is usually perceived as "a redeeming feature" (Nayar 119; see also Feder 2010). Disability studies claim that an objectified impaired body "is reduced to its impairment" making impairment the "the individual's primary identity" (Nayar 143). Perhaps Victor has learned to associate psychological virtues with exterior beauty while living with his parents and fiancée. Perhaps

the thought of an appallingly ugly but spiritually elevated being threatens his belief systems and hence is easier to disregard as "an Other" than to accept as an equal. The creature thus taunts Victor's pride twice: first by failing to be the perfectly beautiful creature he was intended to be (a member of his beautiful and virtuous class), then by not being the vicious monster he was thought to be (a member of a lower, ignorant class).

Sometimes otherization serves to fill a void between the supply of truth and the demand for security (Taylor 188). Before he and his creature first communicate, Frankenstein's descriptions of the creature offer a fine example of otherization based on ignorance and fear. Even when Frankenstein feels compassion and curiosity towards his creature, he describes him as "the fiend" when they enter his hut (*F* 126). A lack of better knowledge can explain why Frankenstein, obsessed with beauty and traumatized by the grief from his brother's death, portrays his creature as a "depraved wretch, whose delight was in carnage and misery" and "[his] own vampire… …forced to destroy all that was dear to [him]" (*F* 94). Before he is reunited with his creature, Frankenstein feels he must live in "daily fear lest the monster… ...should perpetrate some new wickedness" (*F* 113). The mere thought of this "monster" causes Victor to experience violent fantasies of "extinguish[ing] that life which [he] had so thoughtlessly bestowed" (*F* 113). He feels "hatred and revenge" bursting "all bounds of moderation" (*F* 113). Breaking moderation and wishing to "wreak the utmost extent of abhorrence on his head and avenge" (*F* 113) falls into the category of an exaggerated threat response but is still somewhat understandable – especially considering that this mysterious and fearsome creature has apparently strangled his younger brother and caused the death of a family friend. The strong emotion and rush of adrenaline is evident also when the creator and creature are reunited in chapter nine:

> I trembled with rage and horror, resolving to wait his approach and then close with him in mortal combat. He approached; his countenance bespoke bitter anguish, combined

> with disdain and malignity, while its unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes. But I scarcely observed this; rage and hatred had at first deprived me of utterance, and I recovered only to overwhelm him with words expressive of furious detestation and contempt. (*F* 122–123)

The first ever words from the creator to his creature are as follows:

> 'Devil,' I exclaimed, 'do you dare approach me? And do not you fear the fierce vengeance of my arm wreaked on your miserable head? Begone, vile insect! Or rather, stay, that I may trample you to dust! And, oh! That I could, with the extinction of your miserable existence, restore those victims whom you have so diabolically murdered!' (*F* 123)

It is unquestionably an extreme otherization to call someone a "devil" and a "vile insect" but in this context it can be categorized as a coping mechanism based on ignorance and fear.

What does not fall into the category of an understandable threat response is Victor's callousness towards the creature's motives and life story. Although in social psychology and criminology there exists ample evidence of "mutual, escalating provocations" (Baumeister 65) that result in crimes commonly perceived evil, for the truly evil the sheer existence, or in the case of *Frankenstein*, the sheer ugliness of an "Other" can function as a provocation. Eagleton mentions the Holocaust as an example:

> [T]he kind of others [the victims] who drive you [the evildoer] to mass murder are usually those who for some reason or other have come to signify the terrible non-being at the core of oneself. It is this aching absence which you seek to stuff with fetishes, moral ideals, fantasies of purity, the manic will, the absolute state, the phallic figure of the Führer. The obscene enjoyment of annihilating the Other becomes the only way of convincing yourself that you still exist. In this way, you demonstrate that you have

> authority over the only antagonist – death – that cannot be vanquished even in principle. (100)

For the Nazis, for example, the Jewish population came to represent every disgusting and impure aspect in the human race, concluding in the hubris that made them capable of murdering millions of human beings. For Victor Frankenstein, the creature might represent his own intolerable failure as a scientist or even an unfathomable challenge against the superiority of his own race. Kathleen Taylor states that extreme otherization often utilizes references to disgust and contamination (167), making the "disgusting" and "contagious" "Other" a justifiable subject to avoidance or even annihilation. Victor Frankenstein does not initially dare to destroy his creation physically: he is at first content in avoiding him and disregarding his existence. However, he does demonstrate callous cruelty in abandoning and rejecting him.

After Frankenstein has managed to suppress all empathy towards his creature, his description of the "monster" is a prime example of dangerous, conscious otherization. As noted, Victor enters the creature's hut claiming to feel compassion and a sense of duty towards his creature and wanting to learn the truth of his brother's death. For six chapters, the course of a whole day, Frankenstein listens to the detailed history of his creature feeling intermittent compassion and "a wish to console him" *(F* 185). The creature provides him with ample information of his character and misfortunes. Even Frankenstein admits that the tale "proved [the "monster"] to be a creature of fine sensations" (*F* 184). The creature pleads with Frankenstein saying "...it is in your power to recompense me... let your compassion be moved, and do not disdain me" (*F* 125). Although the creature describes valid motives behind his crimes, Frankenstein, fuelled by his disgust towards the creature's appearance, merely registers the confession: "The latter part of his tale had kindled anew in me the anger that had died away while he narrated his peaceful life among the cottagers" (*F* 182). Throughout the rest of

Shelley's novel, Victor deliberately refuses to feel empathy towards the creature's fine sensations and compassionate story.

The most radical turn in Frankenstein's opinions on the creature (from a miserable wretch to a malevolent fiend) happens in chapter 20. In the final hours of creating a female companion for his "monster", Frankenstein falls back into the essence trap and contemplates: "Three years before, I was engaged in the same manner and had created a *fiend whose unparalleled barbarity* had desolated my heart and filled it forever with the bitterest remorse" (*F* 209, my italics). He ignores the original reason for his creature's crimes (his abandonment) and the original reason for creating a companion for him (compassion). The creature's pleas which at first raised a sense of duty in him are now described as "sophisms" that had moved him before and "fiendish threats" that had "struck [him] senseless" (*F* 210). Victor sees his creature watching the future companion through the window but claims that "as I looked on him, his countenance expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery" (*F* 210). This indicates that Victor has ceased feeling empathy towards his creature who he now sees only as a malevolent "Other".

Otherization is a perhaps an explainable but nevertheless dangerous mindset since it might encourage violent behavior. Callousness and cruelty are traits that human beings grow accustomed and even numb to, which means that the cruelty of indifference grows into the cruelty of active violence (Taylor 183). On his deathbed, Frankenstein describes his motives for destroying "the Other" as follows:

> He showed unparalleled malignity and selfishness in evil; he destroyed my friends; he devoted to destruction beings who possessed exquisite sensations, happiness, and wisdom; nor do I know where this thirst for vengeance may end. Miserable himself that he may render no other wretched, he ought to die. The task of his destruction was mine, but I have failed. When actuated by selfish and vicious motives, I asked you to

> undertake my unfinished work, and I renew this request now, when I am only induced by reason and virtue. (*F* 275)

Terry Eagleton reminds us that evil is not some "alien power beyond us" or an "infecting toxic entity" but an ethical affair concerning human freedom and urges (126). This thought is supported by Baumeister who states that people do not need to be tempted by violence – to enable violent behavior one simply has to remove the social and cultural restraints (24).

One method of removing restraints for violence is to perceive Others as definite threats. Victor Frankenstein decides to abort his mission of creating a mate for his creature allegedly in a fear of creating "a race of devils"; "a curse upon everlasting generations" (*F* 210). He destroys the being "on whose future existence" his creature "depended for happiness" (*F* 210–211). As Victor tears his creature's bride to pieces "trembling with passion", "the wretch" sees everything "and with a howl of devilish despair and revenge" withdraws (*F* 201–211). Kathleen Taylor has stated that human cruelty is based on the disparity between symbolic threats and concrete physical danger (86). Taylor explains that perpetrators of cruel acts usually argue their case convincingly, justifying their actions with, for example, "otherizing stereotypes, false beliefs about the victim's power and hostility, and strong emotions to motivate aggressive 'self-defence'" (Taylor 187). Victor Frankenstein believing that the creature and his companion would destroy the human race could represent such a false belief of power and hostility, considering that the creature himself vows to live a peaceful and secluded life with his mate. The belief of his creature's dangerousness makes it possible for the "wretch" to evolve, in Victor Frankenstein's assessment, into someone whose "soul is as hellish as his form, full of treachery and fiend-like malice" (*F* 264) and thus something that must be annihilated. Baumeister adds to Taylor's theory stating that perpetrators often find their actions merely justifiable responses to the perceived attacks by their victims (Baumeister 25). Perpetrators thus feel that they are on the side of the good, defending from the bad (Baumeister 72). Victor

Frankenstein believes he is saving the world from his creature instead of violently and cruelly tearing apart his creature's much awaited companion. A casual (or as Taylor would suggest, "callous") approach to evil actions functions as a coping strategy making it possible for the perpetrators "to sleep at night" (Baumeister 21). It is his fear of the creature that keeps Victor Frankenstein awake at nights, not the act of destroying a being.

From destroying the creature's partner to the end of the novel, Frankenstein sees his creature as nothing but a malevolent devil, "a daemon whose delight is in death and wretchedness" (*F* 212). The "miserable wretch" has evolved to "a monstrous image" "with the mockery of a soul still more monstrous" (*F* 232). After the creature has had his revenge by killing Frankenstein's bride, Victor has no other mission but to destroy him. The dramatic effects of Shelley's novel follow the concept of "otherization as a continuum" (Taylor 8). Taylor quotes Raul Hilberg's book *The Destruction of the European Jews* as an example of this: "The missionaries of Christianity had said in effect: You have no right to live among us as Jews. The secular rulers who followed had proclaimed: You have no right to live among us. The Nazis at last decreed: You have no right to live" (qtd. in Taylor 8). In the Second World War, the continuum pushed the Jewish population first into the ghettos, then to labor camps, then to destruction camps. In Shelley's novel, published more than a hundred years prior to this, the creature is first avoided by distance and feared, then actively deprived of companionship and hope, then hunted to be killed.

Victor's violent endeavours to avoid and annihilate his creature are explicable as threat responses to some extent but the cognitive measures he takes to disregard the sympathetic side of his creature can be described as excessive. As mentioned before, evil is something that transcends normal behavior and takes a threat response to the extreme. In the case of Victor Frankenstein, his hatred towards his creature takes him across the world in an exhausting chase. It is difficult to offer a sufficient explanation why Frankenstein goes into such extremes in

loathing his creature as logically it would be less energy-consuming to coexist with him after the peace offer he makes. According to his own narration, Victor at times feels sympathy and even responsibility towards his creation but suppresses this natural urge for empathy. Does Victor Frankenstein cast away the possibility of a tranquil life ("on you it rests, whether I quit forever the neighbourhood of man and lead a harmless life..." {*F* 126}) because his pride does not tolerate ultimatums ("...or become the scourge of your fellow creatures and the author of your own speedy ruin" {*F* 126})? Or is the presumption of his creature's malevolence too emotionally significant to be challenged? Admitting that his creature is not inevitably dangerous would invalidate the emotional and physical exhaustion he experienced in Ingolstadt when Henry Clerval nursed him back to his health – not to mention the grief he has endured because of his brother. Disregarding these ordeals would require him to admit his miscalculations and relinquish his emotional pain. To a solipsistic mind, this would be a serious task.

Moral agency (the ability to make moral judgments about moral matters and to act on those judgements) is a widely discussed issue in critical posthumanism (Nayar 152). This is especially the case in bioethics when discussing the rights of the disabled, cyborgs, androids and clones (Nayar 152) – and the likes of Frankenstein's creature. The issue is thus applicable also to Shelley's *Frankenstein.* It is evident that Frankenstein's creature is a moral being who acts not only through moral assessment but also through his emotions (Nayar 153). It is also evident that Victor Frankenstein has an enigmatic defect in moral thinking. Victor hence lacks a key feature of "personhood" (Nayar 2014) his creature possesses. This kind of moral deficiency (apparent also in Frankenstein's crimes such as robbing graves, dissecting corpses and, according to his own words, torturing living animals) is not satisfyingly explainable by anything Victor Frankenstein has experienced according to his narration. Why does Frankenstein have such disdain towards the laws of God and men? Why does he refuse to

coexist with his own creature and admit his crimes? This mystery and uncertainty of Victor's behavior resemble that of monstrosity. To some extent, one could argue that in his callous and solipsistic pride, unaffected by laws or moral codes, Victor Frankenstein actively and incomprehensibly challenges and threatens established norms – as monsters do.

3.3. The Consequences of Evil in Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Kathleen Taylor defines human evil (which she prefers to call "cruelty") as follows: "...cruelty is unjustified voluntary behavior which causes foreseeable suffering to an undeserving victim or victims" (29). It might well be added that a perpetrator is "at best indifferent to, at worst gratified by" this foreseeable suffering (Taylor 23). Although evil is usually perceived to consist of concrete acts of violence, Taylor emphasizes that it can also be presented as neglect or withholding of benefits (16). This type of cruel negligence is evident in Shelley's *Frankenstein* when Victor abandons his "newborn" to the elements. When reunited with his creator, the creature recollects the first remembrances of his existence living in a forest near Ingolstadt: "...I lay by the side of a brook resting from my fatigue, until I felt tormented by hunger and thirst" (*F* 127). He continues: "It was dark when I awoke; I felt cold also, and half frightened, as it were, instinctively, finding myself so desolate… ...I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept." (*F* 127–128) In his corpse-like appearance the creature might resemble a monster but in his desolation he resembles a frightened child which makes his abandonment a tragedy. The creature's feelings of loneliness, hunger and fatigue later give room to more existential anguishes when he begins to study the relationships between human beings through the example of a loving family, the DeLanceys:

> And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant, but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man... ...When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned… ...I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge. Oh, that I had forever remained in my native wood, nor known nor felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst, and heat! (*F* 150)

His loneliness is emphasized by the contrast he detects between his life and those of the cottagers: the tender words and smiles of the cottagers are only meant for creatures like themselves, never for "the miserable, unhappy wretch" (*F* 151). He wonders about the existence of his own friends and relations observing that "[n]o father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing" (*F* 151). His desperation worsens when he discovers his creator's diary and learns the disgust Frankenstein felt towards him. The creature describes his feeling to Victor as follows:

> I sickened as I read. "Hateful day when I received life!" I exclaimed in agony. "Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even YOU turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow devils, to admire and encourage him, but I am solitary and abhorred." (*F* 164)

After Victor Frankenstein has left his creature's hut, the reader of *Frankenstein* is presented with no further narration from the creature's point of view. Hence, the depictions of the creature's suffering concern his initial abandonment – not the destruction of his bride, the

murders he commits or the chase he ensues with his creator. However, it is evident that Victor Frankenstein abandoning his creature and his pleas for a companion are cruel actions that result to significant amounts of suffering. It is also clear that the significant suffering caused by Victor is not limited to the creature alone. Earlier chapters in this thesis demonstrate some of the worry Victor's friends and family members endure while he isolates himself as well as how Frankenstein's failed diplomacy with the creature enable the murders of his little brother, closest friend and beloved bride and also the death sentence of a family friend. The consequences of Victor's callous cruelty are enormous – monstrous, even.

In chapter 3.2. it was established that perpetrators of evil acts utilize numerous coping mechanisms to protect themselves from guilt. However, both theological and scientific approaches to evil demonstrate how perpetrators are often negatively impacted by their own actions. Terry Eagleton has stated that evil deeds have a way of returning to "plague the evildoer" with "unforeseeable effects" (33). Frankenstein himself agrees with this, stating: "[i]t is well for the unfortunate to be resigned, but for the guilty there is no peace. The agonies of remorse poison the luxury there is otherwise sometimes found in indulging the excess of grief" (*F* 241). Taylor uses a more scientific approach to the agonies of perpetrators, explaining that chronically activated and unnecessary long-lasting threat responses can damage the body while wasting energy and risking psychological harm (178). Taylor's explanation correlates fluently with Frankenstein's descriptions of his own downfall: "The human frame could no longer support the agonies that I endured, and I was carried out of the room in strong convulsions. A fever succeeded to this. I lay for two months on the point of death; my ravings, as I afterwards heard, were frightful; I called myself the murderer of William, of Justine, and of Clerval." (*F* 224) Frankenstein depicts to Captain Walton a long period of "an absorbing melancholy that resembled madness in its intensity and effects..." (*F* 192) and a "real insanity" that possesses him: "sometimes I was furious and burnt with rage, sometimes low and despondent. I neither

spoke nor looked at anyone, but sat motionless, bewildered by the multitude of miseries that overcame me." (*F* 240)

Besides experiencing physical and psychological symptoms, Frankenstein also describes his emotional sufferings in vivacious language and extensive amounts. After the creature is set loose, the narration begins to overflow with the descriptions of Victor's "horrid anguish... ...such deep and bitter agony" (*F* 108), "hell of intense tortures such as no language can describe" (*F* 111), etc. Captain Walton also describes Frankenstein's "violent feelings" and appearance of being "a slave of passion" "quelling the dark tyranny of despair" (*F* 30). After temporary moments of relief, Frankenstein continues to fall back to the "hell within [him] which nothing could extinguish" (*F* 109), sinking again "trembling and hopeless, into [his] miserable self" (*F* 203) and to a "gloomy and black melancholy that nothing could dissipate" (*F* 230). According to his narration he has become "the most miserable of mortals… ...persecuted and tortured" (*F* 227) and is left wandering "like an evil spirit" for his "deeds of mischief beyond description horrible" (*F* 111). It is obvious that his evil deeds, for which he bears little responsibility, destruct his own life as well as his victims'.

As stated earlier, evil is something that is conceivably present in every human being as well as something which can be explained to some extent. Many traits that enable evil acts, such as human neurobiology, childhood traumas, peer pressure or fear of "the Other" are so deep-seated within ourselves that there exists a moral dilemma in punishing evildoers rather than trying to rehabilitate them. Terry Eagleton repeatedly uses the term "damned" when talking about evildoers and suggests that they experience pain – to which they are willing to find a remedy even through extreme measures such as violence (103). He adds that, considering this pain, "even evil has a grisly kind of rationality about it" (103). To Eagleton, evildoers are not like those sadistic fictional characters who laugh maniacally at the destruction they have established: the evil are those who are "deficient in the art of living" (Eagleton 128). Shelley

offers an example of this kind of deficiency in Victor Frankenstein who is not content in admiring natural wonders but aims to destroy the sanctity and secrecy of them, suffering the consequences.

After Frankenstein's scientific failure, he does not find a replacing ambition but is left to wallow in the void left behind. The companionship of his friends and family are not enough to redeem his confidence since he has difficulty in connecting with other people. Simon Baron Cohen has contemplated on the issue whether or not people with limited capacity for empathy should be imprisoned if they commit a crime (160). Nonetheless, punishment sends a message to the social community, offers an opportunity for remorse and in some prison systems, an opportunity for rehabilitation (Baron Cohen 178). Baron Cohen himself supports the idea of rehabilitation and claims that some aspects of empathy, such as emotion recognition, can be assimilated by training (178). He also encourages sympathy for perpetrators, stating that living with a zero capacity for empathy can ultimately be lonely and risks being constantly misunderstood or even condemned as selfish (44). Instead of blaming someone for their evil deeds, it could be possible to teach them components of empathy. Roy F. Baumeister also mentions the aspect of addiction: the rush created by doing something forbidden may result in an inability to end such behavior (51). Some perpetrators of rape have claimed to have formed an addiction to the "forbidden pleasure" becoming unable to stop themselves from committing the crime (Baumeister 51). Where Taylor has attempted to explain evil through neuroscience, Baron Cohen through empathy erosion and Baumeister though addiction, Eagleton offers the Freudian death drive as an explanation: the suggestion that human beings unconsciously desire their own destruction (E108). Eagleton thus connects the theological urge for a meaningless void to psychoanalysis and states that a conflicted human being suffering from a struggle between his superego, the id and the external world understandably finds his own dissolution as a very tempting idea (E108). He concludes that if perpetrators are indeed mad and evil, it

makes them criminally not responsible and thus morally innocent: they should be cared for in psychiatric hospitals, not convicted (5).

Trying to understand perpetrators has a connection with ending the circle of cruelty and the continuum of otherization as well as preventing the essence trap – something which the creature and creator fail to achieve in Shelley's *Frankenstein.* The mutual hostility between these two characters demonstrate how evil could be diminished by abandoning the concepts of "an evil Other" and "a righteous self", but is not. The duel thus indicate the complicated nature of perpetrators and victims, suggesting that "evil bad guys" and "heroic good guys" hardly ever exist in the actual world. Mary Shelley, in *Frankenstein,* depicts the deep and desperate voids of meaninglessness that ensue when otherization is taken too far.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Why Are Fictional Monsters Necessary?

The world has changed much since the time human beings had to be constantly vigilant against predators and other physical threats. Humans have found methods on how to shelter and defend themselves from beasts as well as how to communicate between different cultures. We have gained understanding of abnormal appearances both in animals and in human beings making the formerly monstrous-looking explainable. We have also begun to understand that the truly monstrous lies in unexplainable crimes. The cyclops, trolls and evil wizards have advanced from our superstitions to the world of cinema and literature. They no longer scare us but excite and entertain us. Even monsters resembling the ones from real life, such as serial killers and evil dictators, are recurring characters in fiction. Current monsters and evil creatures play a wholly different part in our lives than classic monsters did.

Kathleen Taylor claims that one reason people find fictional cruelty glamorous is the strong emotive power without the consequences: cruelty is a source of salient emotional experiences, and when cruel acts are connected to fictional and charismatic characters, the feeling of powerfulness without the aftermath is inherently interesting (214). Fictional heroes who destroy one-dimensional villains are considered fascinating, not disturbing (Taylor 215). Roy F. Baumeister has stated that in the postmodern culture there lies little shock value which inspires people to turn to what they imagine as evil: “vampires, mummies, zombies, rotting corpses, maniacal laughter, demoniac children, bleeding wallpaper, multicoloured vomit, and so on” (122). Baumeister, however, adds that such things are hardly evil, but “just plain nasty” (122). Fictional monsters would thus serve as an escape from the boring everyday life we live – with hardly any predators or natural catastrophes to make our hearts race.

Fictional monsters and villains also serve as a comparison to our own values. Monstrosity and monstrousness have never been objective but dictated qualities given to something queer and disturbing; they have also been a mirror to humanity and self (Wright 17). Michel Foucault has stated that "otherness is never just found encountered but always constructed" (qtd. in Wright 17). Caricatured villains with exaggerated tendencies towards sadism reassure audiences that evil people are a quite different from ourselves as well as easy to recognize and punish (Taylor 215). If a sadistic villain faces a violent and sadistic end, we find it gratifying (Taylor 215). The immunity or "plot armor" the hero is usually granted gives audiences a sense of security: whatever horrible things happen around us, the point-of-view character (resembling ourselves) remains untouched (Taylor 216). The audiences can feel gratified by the notion of one's own righteousness compared to the villain – as well as by the notion of one's own safety as no wicked deed is left unpunished.

Villains and monsters are not only an alien force to be avoided and annihilated. They also provide perspectives to our own selves. Literature critics such as Foust have studied the Freudian theories of doppelgängers and the terrifying reflection of self, which in fantasy literature has often been utilized as the antagonist: "the Other" represents something familiar but abandoned, alienated from the self (para. 4). At the same time, monsters and villains are a terrifying and entertaining force of literature and cinema, at the same time they can act as a creative force enabling new perspectives on laws, limits and social structures as well as on human understanding, values and belief systems (see Wright 2013). By defining what is monstrous and evil, we define what is forbidden. Monstrosity and evil can thus be seen both as a method for humans to feel better about themselves and seclude unwanted features to monstrous beings – or as a reflector for improving and understanding our inner workings. Most importantly, monstrosity can help people understand the potential to evil acts in every human being which makes it more possible to prevent evil from actualizing.

Authors such as Baumeister, Cohen, Eagleton, Taylor and Wright have studied the concepts of monstrosity, evil and cruelty from the understanding perspective claiming that these concepts are not mysterious or incomprehensible. On the contrary, understanding the concepts might help to resolve the circle of cruelty, the continuum of otherization and the essence trap. Fictional monsters and villains have throughout centuries entertained the bored mind, helped to exclude unwanted attributes from ourselves and helped to understand our own monstrosity. Perhaps the next step would be for the monsters and villains to help audiences understand and "dedemonize" "the Other" – to condemn the crime but understand the criminal.

4.2. The Relevance of Evil, Cruelty and Monstrosity in Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Otherization, the essence trap and callous cruelty are crucial elements in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.* This makes the novel, written over two hundred years ago by the then 19-year-old Shelley, a very current piece of literature. Instances and consequences of cruelty as well as otherization are visible in the news daily. Political discourse also utilizes otherizing terminology, feeding the fears of the listener and offering seemingly effective solutions to complex issues (Taylor 150). However, otherization as a problem-solving method has a long history of failure, especially when compared to the methods of many modern societies where the potential of cooperation, negotiation and compromise can limit conflict (Taylor 242). Kathleen Taylor claims that much of cruelty stems from the need to feel powerful and authoritative – leaving diplomacy in the background because of ego, ignorance, lazy thinking and the instant gratification of a power rush (242). Diplomacy can, however, be learned through education, reducing false beliefs and questioning those who have something to gain from otherization (Taylor 243). Critical posthumanism has already begun to criticize human tendencies to define themselves *against* the deformed and seemingly monstrous and marking

artificial boundaries between human and nonhuman features as well as dominating the less valued lifeforms (Nayar 110). Fictional narratives such as Shelley's *Frankenstein* may help in addressing these issues.

One method of adjusting our mindset against otherization might be to make critical reassessments of misunderstood fictional antagonists such as Shelley's "the creature" as well as falsely esteemed protagonists such as Victor Frankenstein. It is very human to fear the visually disturbing and different, but the notion of the creature's monstrosity is an outstandingly fixed one also because of his presentation in many popular films and TV adaptations (e.g. *Frankenstein,* 1931). However, a better understanding of Victor Frankenstein and his creature might help audiences understand otherization and the essence trap in a real life context as well – much like the feminist readings of *Star Wars* or *Twilight* might adjust our views of appropriate romantic advances. A close reading of the Moomin books might promote empathy against the socially excluded members of our society. A close reading of *Frankenstein* might adjust our views on "the Other" in a way that promotes empathy and diminishes cruelty based on ignorance or pride.

In the 19th century context there was no opportunity for "the monster" to fit in the natural order but as science and understanding of different cultures, appearances and behavioral dysfunctions evolve, so does the reader's capacity to sympathize with different kinds of creatures. It is easy to surrender to the prejudiced fear of Victor Frankenstein instead of recognizing the point of view of "the Other". The creature however proves himself a peace-seeking, intelligent and adaptive being whereas his creator is the one who lacks empathy, listening skills and adaptiveness, maintaining his steadfast attitude despite better knowledge. The consequences of his narrow-mindedness are brutal.

In our world where cultures clash violently and wars become more and more global, Shelley's novel is a very current piece of literature, showing the detrimental consequences of

excessive pride, narrow-mindedness and even ethnocentrism which can lead to otherization and cruelty. Perhaps future generations with a better understanding of otherization and empathy read Shelley's classic novel as a psychological drama of a racist creator abandoning his creation. When referring to "the Frankenstein monster" they might not refer to the creature, but to Victor – the prideful scientist who attempts to challenge the monopoly on the sacred but creates a void of meaninglessness instead.

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